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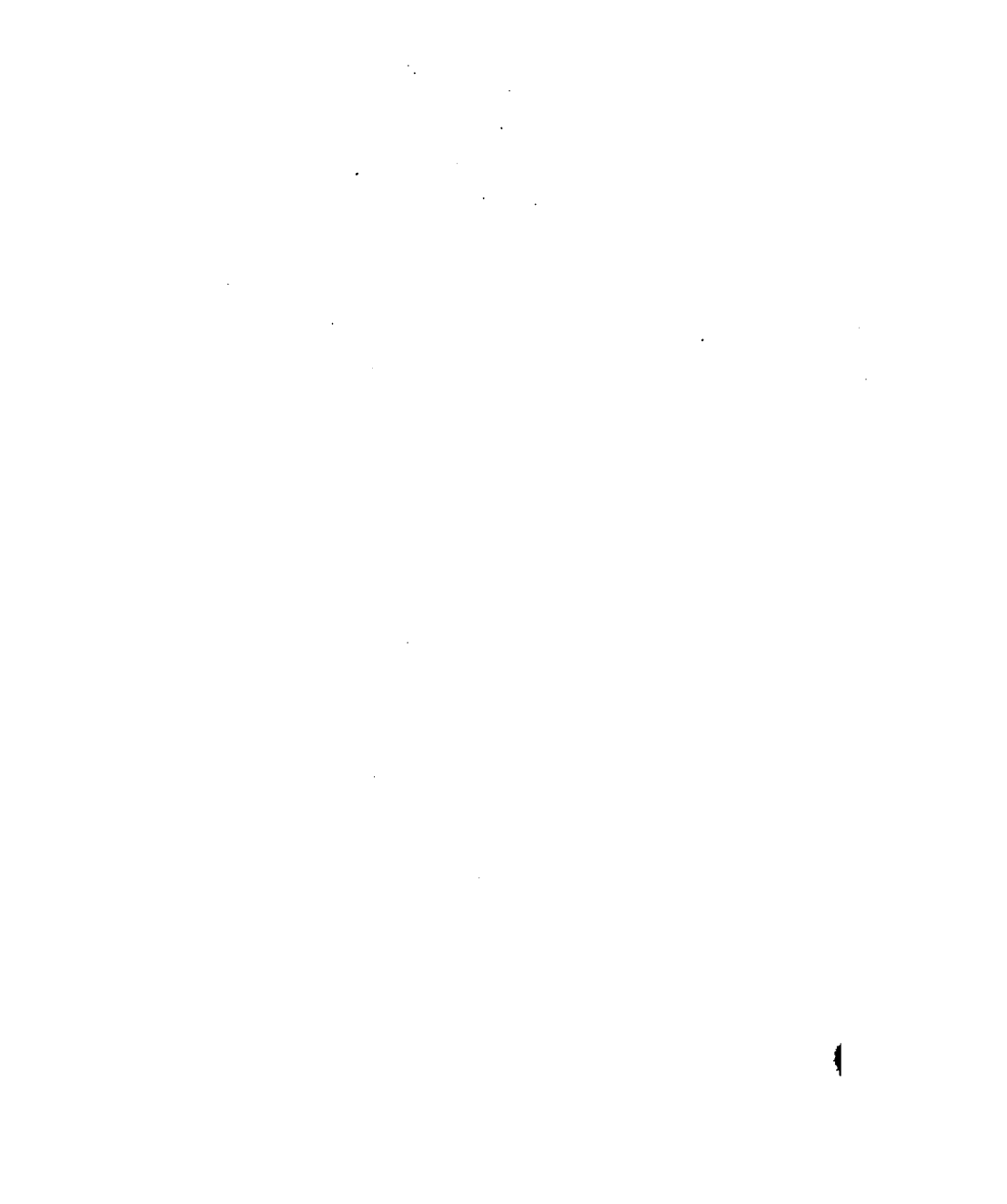


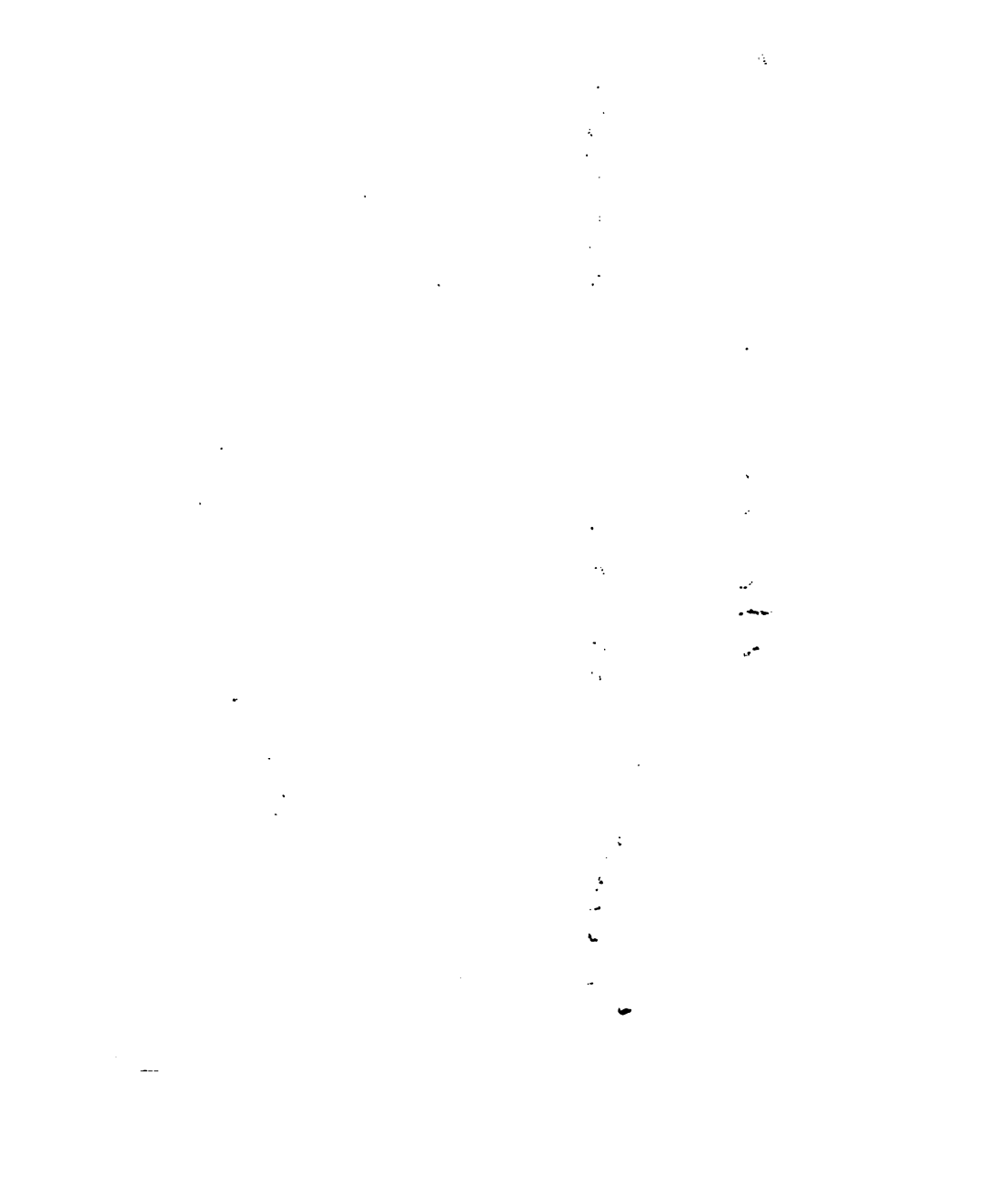
THE STOLEN CHERRIES.



THE STOLEN CHERRIES.







THE STOLEN CHERRIES;

OR,

TELL THE TRUTH AT ONCE.

BY EMILIA MARRYAT NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF 'GERALD AND HARRY,' 'THE EARLY START IN LIFE,'
'THE CHILDREN'S PIC-NIC,' ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANCIS A. FRASER.



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CHAPTER I.

HUGH AND HARRY.

HUGH and Harry were two little boys who always lived in London. They had lived in London ever since they were born, and although that was not really such a long time ago, it seemed very long to Harry and Hugh; for Hugh was nearly ten years old, and Harry was almost eight.

One morning at breakfast-time Mr. Selby—that was the name of these little boys' papa—looked up from a letter which he had been reading, and said—

‘Here is an invitation for you two boys to spend the holidays with your Uncle Tom, but of course you will not wish to go,’ and papa looked very sly.

Midsummer holidays were just coming on, and the boys had been counting up the days which would come before then but a minute ago, and

thinking it very hard that they should have to go back to school even for a fortnight.

Hugh and Harry Selby went to a school in London, and very often came home from Saturday till Monday.

‘You cannot wish to go,’ said Mr. Selby, ‘for you will not care for running about in the meadows, and milking cows and riding donkeys.’

‘Papa!’ said Hugh, ‘should we really see cows milked?’

‘Or eating gooseberries and currants,’ said Mr. Selby.

‘Oh, papa,’ said Harry, ‘we should; you know we should.’

‘Or helping to make the hay,’ said Mr. Selby again, ‘or feeding the cocks and hens.’

‘Papa, don’t be so silly,’ said Hugh.

‘Or running after the pigs.’

Harry jumped up and clapped his hand over his papa’s mouth; but Mr. Selby would go on.

‘So I think I had best write to Uncle Tom and say you had both of you prefer remaining at school for the holidays, and doing double lessons.’

‘Papa, you are the most ridiculous papa I ever knew in all my life,’ said Harry. ‘Just listen to him, mamma, he does make us laugh so.’

‘Mamma was laughing too.

‘We may go, may not we, mamma?’ asked Hugh.

‘Ask your papa,’ she answered.

Both the boys jumped upon Mr. Selby, Hugh on his back and Harry on his lap, and both hugged him so tightly round the neck that he pretended he was being choked, and at last promised they should go and stay with Uncle Tom, if they would let go his throat and behave like decent boys.

I don’t know what Mr. Selby called behaving decently, but Hugh and Harry leaped and hopped about the room more like two monkeys out of Wombwell’s Menagerie than respectable boys who were in the Latin grammar.

Dear! what a noise boys do make sometimes. I think papas and mammas’ heads must be made of very hard stuff that they do not sometimes go deaf and stupid in holiday time.

‘And why may not me go too?’ asked Alfy, who was not yet four.

‘Because Uncle Tom doesn’t want such a little chappy as you!’ said his papa.

‘Littoo!’ said Alfy, ‘boys what wear tulics and towlers ain’t littoo.’

‘Wait till you wear knickerbockers,’ said Harry;

‘ tunics and trousers are baby’s dress ; you ’ll be a big boy then, Alf.’

Hugh laughed out loud.

‘ Did you ever see a big boy in knickers and stockings, Hal ? ’ said he, putting his hands in his pockets. He asked the question in a loud voice, and held himself very upright. ‘ Big boys wear jackets and trousers like mine.’

‘ Oh dear ! Oh dear ! ’ said papa, ‘ I am afraid you are all of you too old to care to go and see Uncle Tom, or to have any holidays at all. I wish one of you would stay in town and do my work, and let me be a little boy.’

‘ No, we are not too old, papa,’ said both Hugh and Harry at once. ‘ We would like to go ; we are not so very old as all that.’

Mr. Selby shook his head. ‘ Boys in knickerbockers to think of eating gooseberries and currants ! ’ he said.

‘ We are not too old, indeed, papa.’

‘ A boy in a jacket to play in the fields like a child ! ’

‘ But, papa, I should like it,’ said Hugh.

‘ Too old, I am afraid,’ said Mr. Selby.

‘ No, papa, we are not very old,’ said Harry.

‘ Indeed, papa, we are rather young,’ said Hugh.

‘We are rather little boys,’ said Harry.

‘So I have always thought,’ said papa.

‘But you must remember one thing,’ said their papa, gravely, ‘if I let you go to stay with Uncle Tom, you must be good boys. Do you think I can trust you?’

‘Of course you can, papa,’ said Hugh.

‘I expect Guy and Walter are very good boys, much better than you two.’

‘Why should they be?’ asked Harry.

‘I think they would not be up to mischief, as some boys I know,’ said Mr. Selby.

Now, Hugh and Harry could hardly be called good boys; for I am sorry to say they had learned some very bad tricks from some of the boys at school, and the worst of it was, that they were sly enough to be much better before their papa and mamma than they were behind their backs.

Then their mamma said kindly—

‘I am sure Hugh and Harry will try to do all they ought; won’t you, my dear boys?’

And the boys answered, ‘Oh yes, mamma.’

But when they were alone in their bedroom, Hugh said to his brother,—

‘I wonder what papa meant about Guy and Walter being such good boys. I am sure I shall

hate Guy; for I know he will be a prig, and will tell tales of us to Uncle Tom.'

'He had better not,' said Harry very grandly, forgetting that his cousin Guy was a great many years older than himself.

'No,' said Hugh, 'he had better not.'





CHAPTER II.

TRAVELLING BY RAIL.

IT seemed as if the twenty-first of June would never come. Harry declared that every day grew longer than the day before out of spite ; but after all it did come, and everything was packed up, and the cab was at the door, and the boys were in such a hurry that they could hardly wait to say ‘ Goodbye ;’ and little Alfy had a new drum to comfort him at being left behind ; and both the boys wished to go upon the box of the cab, so that Mr. Selby said he supposed he and the driver had better get inside ; and at length they were off, rolling as fast as ever they could to the railway station.

‘ I think,’ said Harry, rubbing his hands, ‘ that there is nothing in the world so jolly as going in a cab, it jolts so over the stones ; I wish it always went over stones ; and sometimes it almost knocks

me off my seat. Why do you make a face, papa ?’

‘ There is no accounting for tastes, my dear,’ said Mr. Selby.

But when they arrived at the station, Harry thought it more jolly still ; there was such a bustle and noise, and everybody was running backwards and forwards ; and if he liked being knocked about, he got plenty of that by being always in everybody’s way. Both boys were quite red in the face by the time their train drew up, and they jumped into the carriage at once.

‘ Had not you better walk up and down with me ?’ asked their papa ; ‘ the train will not start for ten minutes, and you will have more than enough of it before the day is over.’

But Harry and Hugh thought it quite impossible that they could ever have enough of a railway carriage, so they left Mr. Selby to walk up and down by himself, while they sat in each seat of the carriage in turn, to feel which was the softest.

‘ I should like to live all my life in a railway carriage,’ said Harry ; ‘ this side should be my drawing-room, and opposite my bedroom. I would keep provisions under one of the seats.’

‘ How would you cook your dinner ?’ asked Hugh.

‘I should never have dinner,’ said Harry; ‘nothing but tarts. I should buy them at the refreshment room, and keep a store in the carriage.’

‘I wonder what sort of boys Guy and Walter are?’ said Hugh in another minute.

‘Muffs, I daresay,’ said Harry; ‘you know they have never been to London, and they go to some country school. I expect I shan’t think much of them.’ And Harry stretched his little legs out, and thought they looked very big.

Just then Mr. Selby opened the carriage door and got in, and after him a lady and gentleman, and in another minute the train moved on. At first there was plenty of amusement for the boys in looking from the windows at the tops of the houses, and the different things they passed, and Harry was still of opinion that he could live all his life in a railway carriage.

‘What a jolly noise!’ said he, as the engine gave a shriek.

The lady looked up at him and laughed.

‘And what a jolly smell!’ said the gentleman, as a horrid smell of hot grease came in at the window.

Then the lady took a bag of buns out of her travelling bag and offered one to Harry, saying, ‘Take one, my dear.’

Harry would have liked one very much indeed, but he did not like being called by a stranger 'My dear,' as if he was a very little boy, so he made a small bow, and answered,—

'Thanks, I have only just had breakfast.'

His papa looked at him with surprise, but said nothing, and Harry lost the plum bun by his own nonsense ; for the lady ate them herself, and I daresay she thought him a little prig.

It was not very long though before even Harry found that he would not care to travel for ever. He got sleepy, but he could not go to sleep with comfort. He had nothing to do, for he did not care about reading newspapers. At one of the stations his papa got out and bought a lot of buns and biscuits ; but we all know it does not take long to eat buns.

At every station Hugh and Harry asked if it was Middleton, where Uncle Tom lived ; but it seemed as if Middleton would no more come than the holidays would until that day, and when at last they did arrive at Middleton, they were both half asleep, and did not in the least expect it. The train stopped, and they jumped out, and there was Uncle Tom standing on the platform waiting for them. The boys had not seen their uncle for two years, but they knew him directly

by his great brown beard, and they were very glad to see him again, only that he made both Hugh and Harry feel so dreadfully ashamed by kissing them on the platform. So with very red faces they followed their uncle to where an open carriage stood. He packed them both in at the back, and he and their papa got in front, leaving the luggage to come on with a donkey cart; and their Uncle Tom laughed out loud as he shook hands again with Mr. Selby, and turned round to the boys and told them to hold on; and as soon as the horse's head was let go, he darted off at such a rate that Hugh and Harry thought he was running away, and they clung with all their hands to the sides of the seat; and even then they were jumped about and bumped forward, and their caps would hardly keep upon their heads. Everything was so new to the boys, that they were every moment screaming to one another to look. Each house they saw they felt sure must be Uncle Tom's, and sometimes they thought that a barn would turn out to be 'Greenway Cottage,' which was the name of Uncle Tom's house; but when they did come to it, they talked still more, for it was much too large to be called a cottage at all; and as they came to the drive gate, they had thought the lodge must be the house.



CHAPTER III.

UNCLE TOM'S HOUSE.

UNCLE Tom's house was a pretty place, standing in the midst of a number of trees, and everything round about it looked green. There were four children capering on the doorsteps as the dog-cart drove up to the door. Two boys and two girls, that is, most people would have called them children, but Hugh and Harry thought that one of them was almost a man—which meant that he was a little bigger than themselves.

This eldest one came forward as Uncle Tom drew up, and said—

‘Well, father.’

‘Well, my son,’ said Uncle Tom, ‘here is your Uncle George, and here are your cousins. This is Guy,’ said he, turning to Hugh and Harry, and then Guy held out his hand, and said to the boys, ‘I am very glad to see you. Alice, these are

cousins Hugh and Harry; Walter, Edy, come here and shake hands. Now, shall you like to come and feed the rabbits ?'


'I think that perhaps your cousins may be tired, Guy,' said his father.

But Harry and Hugh said they would rather feed the rabbits than anything else, and so all six of the children scampered off as hard as they could run. Hugh and Harry had thought that they would feel shy at first being with their strange cousins, but Guy did not seem to remember that they were strange.

'You shall feed them,' said Guy to his cousins ;
'I have done it every day, you know.'

Harry and Hugh had never before had dear little tame rabbits in their arms, and they thought they should never be tired of stroking them and playing with them. Once or twice the little girl Edy, who was only five years old, said she wished that they would not stop with the rabbits so long ; but it did not come into the mind of Hugh or Harry to leave the rabbits to please Edy, and Guy had to keep his little sister patient by saying that they would very soon go to the cocks and hens.

At last Harry and Hugh had seen enough of the rabbits, and they went with their cousins to



the farmyard. I am sorry to say that they were rather rude, for when they found what a funny cackling the fowls made when they were chased, they hunted them round and round the yard, although Guy called to them again and again to stop.

I think they never would have stopped at all until they had half killed some of the fowls ; as it was, the poor birds were flying awkwardly over the pigstyes and everything in their way, and squeaking like mad cocks and hens, when a loud voice suddenly came and stopped them—

‘ Who’s that hunting the cocks and hens ?’

Hugh and Harry stood still and looked about to see where the voice came from. The next moment Uncle Tom appeared, and he said—

‘ Children, have not you been told, again and again, not to tease the fowls ? Guy, I am surprised at you. I thought you would have known better.’

Hugh and Harry expected that Guy would say directly, ‘ It was not I ; it was my cousins.’ But Guy held his tongue.

The other three children, Walter, Alice, and Edith, had left the farmyard as soon as they had taken the eggs.

‘ Such a bad example to your cousins,’ said

Uncle Tom, 'and you older than both of them. I am very angry with you.'


Guy's eyes filled with tears, and he looked towards Hugh and Harry; he could not think why they did not say that he had had nothing to do with hunting the fowls; but neither of his cousins spoke, they only looked very sheepish and red.

'You had better go in-doors,' said Uncle Tom to Guy, and Guy walked slowly to the house. Harry and Hugh did not see him again that evening, and they were afraid of asking after him, so they tried to forget all about the farm-yard and hunting the fowls, and to amuse themselves by listening to Aunt Sophy as she talked, or played the piano and sung songs to them.

Uncle Tom and Hugh's papa were very busy talking together, for Hugh's papa was going back to London the next morning, and of course they had a great deal to say.

Once, during the evening, Aunt Sophy went away, and stopped out of the room for some time, and then the boys had to amuse themselves, so they wandered all over the drawing-room, looking at all the ornaments.

There was a little bracket-stand at one corner of the room, and Harry must needs go pulling



about the little china ornaments which were upon it. Presently he dropped a small cup. His heart stood still with fear for the moment,—not at what he had done, I am sorry to say, but lest it should be found out.

His papa and uncle were at that moment talking rather loudly, so that they did not hear the little noise the cup made in falling, and no one else was in the room but Hugh.

Harry stooped and picked up the cup, which was broken into a great many pieces, and Hugh came and looked over his shoulder.

‘Won’t I tell of you!’ said Hugh, laughing.

‘No, Hugh—no, you mustn’t. If you do, it will be a great shame,’ said Harry, half crying. ‘I declare, if you do, I’ll go and tell that it was you chased the fowls, and I helped.’

‘You helped, you little sneak!’ said Hugh. ‘You hunted them quite as much as I did. There, don’t begin to blubber. I won’t tell, if you behave yourself. All this was said in a low voice; and just then Aunt Sophy came into the room, and Harry, having put the pieces of the cup on the bracket, tried to look as if nothing had happened.

That was the most foolish thing he could have done, as you will see. If he had gone to his

aunt and said, 'I am very sorry that I have broken this little cup; I ought not to have touched it;' then the worst would have been over; but now, until it was found out, Harry was in momentary fear and a miserable state.

But he was not brave enough to tell the truth.





CHAPTER IV.

HARRY'S IGNORANCE.

THE next day, after breakfast, Uncle Tom took Hugh and Harry round the garden. There were plenty of gooseberries and currants still left, and their uncle told the boys that they might pick some to eat, which you may be sure Hugh and Harry were not slow to do. As they passed along by the garden wall, Hugh said,—‘What a lot of cherries!’ and his uncle answered—

‘Yes; they are very early this year, but that is an early sort. This is the first year that tree has borne, and I wish to see what sort of fruit it is. The cherries are not nearly ripe yet; you must mind not to touch them, boys, remember. I have told your cousins the same.’

Uncle Tom looked round at the boys quickly as he said this, and Hugh and Harry said,—‘No, we won’t;’ but as they walked on they looked

back at the cherries several times, thinking that they looked very nice, and that Uncle Tom must be mistaken about their not being ripe.

Just then Walter came running up to them with a pretty little slow-worm in his hand. A slow-worm is about three times as long as your little hand, and is prettily spotted with yellow and white on a dark shining skin.

‘Look!’ said Walter, ‘look what I have found! May I keep it, papa? Look, Harry,’ and he placed the little slow-worm upon his cousin’s arm.

Harry gave a scream and threw the little beast from him, then placed his foot upon it as hard as he could, so as to pinch off its tail.

‘What did you do that for?’ asked Uncle Tom, while poor little Walter burst into tears.

‘Horrid thing! it is a snake, it will sting,’ said Harry, seizing a spade which lay near, and beating and stamping at the slow-worm.

‘It will do nothing of the sort,’ said his uncle. ‘You are a very silly little boy, and have injured the poor little beast through your ignorance.’

‘I thought all snakes stung,’ said Harry rather sulkily, while he stood a long way off from the slow-worm. ‘They do in the Zoological Gardens; I know they do.’

‘ You should not be in such a hurry to kill any living thing, Harry,’ said Uncle Tom. ‘ Vipers sting, as you call it ; that is, they will if they are trodden on ; but even a viper could not hurt you at that distance.’

Walter was by this time dancing on in front, until he stopped in front of some bee-hives.

‘ How can you go so close ?’ asked Hugh. ‘ Bees sting at any rate ; you must say “ Yes ” to that, Uncle Tom.’

‘ Bees sting nasty boys ; they won’t sting those who are kind to them.’

‘ Uncle Tom !’

‘ It is quite true, my dear. Look how they buzz round Walter’s head.’

As Uncle Tom spoke, a bee settled on some flowers Walter held in his hand.

‘ Oh, how can you ?’ said Harry. ‘ Oh, get away, do, you nasty things !’ said he again, as the bees saw him and Hugh, and flew close to them to look in their faces. Harry began laying about him with the spade which he still held since killing the slow-worm, and his uncle called out—

‘ They really will sting you if you go on in that way. They are only examining you because you are a stranger.’

‘But I don’t like them,’ said Harry; ‘make them go away.’

‘I think you had better go away yourself, you and your brother too, for the bees are getting angry with you.’

Hugh and Harry both took to their heels, while several of the bees flew, making an angry noise, after them, until I suppose they made up their minds that they were not much worth looking at; and they returned to the hive to go on with their work.

As Uncle Tom and the boys drew near the house they were met by Aunt Sophy. She looked very vexed, and held in her hand the little china tea-cup which Harry had broken the evening before.

‘Oh, do look here!’ said Aunt Sophy; ‘some one has broken my little pet cup. I am so sorry. Do you know anything about it, boys?’

Hugh turned rather red as he answered ‘No!’ and glanced at Harry, so Aunt Sophy looked at him.

‘Do you?’ she asked.

Harry also denied it; but I think Aunt Sophy thought the boys looked odd, for she said again, — ‘Are you quite sure?’

‘Quite sure,’ said both Harry and Hugh.

‘It is very odd, indeed,’ said Aunt Sophy. ‘Of course, if it had been one of our own boys, he would have told me about it; I am quite sure of that. Would you not, Walter?’

‘Yes, mamma dear, I would directly,’ said the little boy; ‘but I didn’t break it, mamma.’

Then Harry, who we know was the one who had broken the cup, said such a wicked thing. He said, ‘Do you think it could have been Guy, Aunt Sophy?’

‘What makes you ask it?’ said Aunt Sophy. ‘Guy would not touch things he has been told to leave alone.’


Aunt Sophy put her hand on Uncle Tom’s arm, and said nothing more about the cup; and Harry whispered to Hugh,—‘She’s cross, I think.’

Aunt Sophy said to Uncle Tom, ‘Come in-doors now. Mr. Marshall is here, and wants particularly to see you.’

As they came near the house, a gentleman walked out through the garden door and came towards them.

‘Oh, here he comes!’ said Aunt Sophy. ‘He would not wait for you.’ And she went in-doors.

Mr. Marshall joined Uncle Tom, and talked to him for a little while, then, when he saw the two boys, he said—



‘These are not yours, Selby? I think I know all yours.’

‘No, these are two of my brother’s,’ answered Uncle Tom.

Hugh and Harry knew manners, and so they touched their caps to the gentleman.

‘Nice smart-looking boys,’ said he. ‘What’s your name, my fine fellow?’

‘Hugh Selby, sir,’ answered Hugh.

‘And yours?’

‘Harry, sir.’

‘Very pretty names, both of them,’ said Mr. Marshall kindly. ‘Mind you take care of them, my boys, and make them names to be proud of, instead of ashamed of. Do you hear?’

Hugh and Harry said ‘Yes;’ but I think they hardly remembered what Mr. Marshall said beyond a minute after he had said it; and they wandered away together, while Uncle Tom and his friend talked.

They both ran into the stable-yard, through which they saw that Mr. Marshall’s horse was being led out, for he had come some distance to see Uncle Tom, because he lived the other side of Middleton, the place where the railway had stopped when Hugh and Harry first met Uncle Tom.



CHAPTER V.

THE CHERRIES.

WHAT a pity it is that boys should go on wishing for what they know they must not have! Harry and Hugh had been told that they were not to touch Uncle Tom's cherries, and they ought to have thought no more about them, but that very same day Hugh said to his brother—

‘Where are the others?’ He meant his cousins.

‘Oh, they are going to the hayfield,’ said Harry. ‘Walter told me to ask you to come on.’

‘I have been to the hayfield once to-day,’ said Hugh. ‘I say, Harry, let us go into the garden—you and I. We don’t want the others.’

‘I’ve eaten lots of gooseberries already,’ said Harry. ‘I am quite sick of them. I don’t care for gooseberries any more.’

Walter ran out of the house, where he had been for his hat, shouting, 'Come on, Hugh! Come on, Harry! The rest are going down the lane.'

But Hugh drew Harry behind some laurels, and made him stoop down, so that Walter should not see him. Next, Guy ran out after Walter, and the two stood together, near enough for the hidden boys to hear what they said.

'Where are Hugh and Harry?' asked Guy. 'Father sent me back to look for them.'

'I don't know,' said Walter. 'I called them, but did not get any answer. Never mind, Guy. Come on without them. It is much pleasanter alone. I don't like either of them much; for Harry killed my poor little slow-worm.'

'You should not say that, Walter, dear,' said Guy. 'It is not right. God wishes you to love everybody.' As Guy spoke he put his arm round his little brother's neck, and Walter raised his face to kiss Guy.

'I wish I was good like you, Guy, dear,' he said. 'And it makes me so angry that papa should think you hunted the fowls when it was Hugh and Harry. And I am sure they broke mamma's china cup.'

'Hush, hush, Walter! You must not say so.'

‘ Well, don’t you think they did, Guy ? Come, tell truth.’

Guy laughed, but said nothing.

‘ You do think so. I know you do, and I am so glad,’ said Walter. ‘ And I wish they would go home again. Don’t you, Guy ?’

‘ Well, yes,’ said Guy. ‘ I shan’t be sorry when they go.’ And Guy and Walter moved away, shouting again, ‘ Hugh ! Harry ! where are you ?’

‘ Shan’t you be sorry when we go ?’ said Hugh, imitating his cousin, as soon as he was out of hearing. ‘ I tell you what, I hate that Guy, with his fine good speeches. I know he thinks you broke the cup, and he ’ll tell Aunt Sophy of it some day. See if he doesn’t.’

‘ Why did you make me hide ?’ asked Harry. ‘ I want to go to the hayfield.’

‘ Because I know of a lark. I think it is very mean of Uncle Tom to try and keep all those cherries for himself ; and I don’t see why you and I should not have some.’

‘ Oh, Hugh,’ said Harry ; ‘ but we may be found out ?’

You see Harry’s only fear was that they should be found out. He was not afraid of doing a wicked thing. Taking Uncle Tom’s cherries slyly

was the same as stealing ; but when a boy or girl is in the habit of saying what is not true, or telling lies, it does not take long to make that boy or girl a thief. There is only a step between the two.

‘ We shan’t be found out,’ said Hugh ; ‘ who is to know who took them, if we say we know nothing about it ? Look sharp. Let’s be there and back before those fellows can get to the hay-field.’

Harry ran at once with his brother without saying anything more, and as soon as they reached the cherry-tree, they both began picking and eating the cherries as fast as they could stuff them into their mouths, ripe and unripe ones all alike. They could not have tasted what they were like, I am sure ; but they were so afraid of being seen, and in such a hurry to get back before Guy and Walter, that they had no time to enjoy their wicked theft.

Guy and Walter were all the while calling aloud everywhere—‘ Hugh ! Harry ! where are you ?’

They had gone to the stable-yard to look for them, when Hugh and Harry came out of the garden, and before Guy and Walter returned, the two naughty boys had run across the field which was near the garden, and into the lane leading to

the hayfield. Aunt Sophy said to them when they arrived, panting and breathless,—

‘Why did not you come before, my dears? Where are Guy and Walter?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Hugh.

‘Your uncle sent them to look for you. Where have you been?’

Hugh did not know quite what to say for a minute; then he answered,—

‘We have been looking for birds’ nests in the fields. We did not hear Guy.’

Presently came Guy and Walter, tearing wildly, and red-hot in the face.

‘We can’t find them anywhere. I think they must have hidden—hullo! why, here they are!’

‘Did you find any birds’ nests?’ asked Uncle Tom.

‘No,’ said Hugh; and that was the first true word he had spoken since he came into the field.

‘I will show you a bird’s nest, if you come with me,’ said Uncle Tom, ‘such a nest as perhaps you have never seen before;’ and he led the way to one side of the field, where grew several clumps of gorse bushes. It was some time before Uncle Tom could find the nest, and he scratched his hands very much in doing so, but he did not seem to mind that much. It was such an odd nest;

perhaps you have never seen one either, so I will tell you what it was like. It was covered all over with that grey moss which is called lichen, which grows on the branches of apple-trees, and lasts through all the winter. This nest looked like a ball of grey lichen, and it had one little tiny hole in the side.

‘Why, no bird could get in or out of this hole,’ said Hugh; ‘it is only big enough for a bumble-bee.’

‘And the bird is not bigger than a bumble-bee much,’ said Uncle Tom.

‘I know,’ said Harry, ‘I know what bird it is; a humming-bird. That’s what it is; mamma has a case full of them at home.’

‘The only thing against that, Master Harry, is, that humming birds do not live in England,’ said his uncle.

‘Then what bird is it?’ asked Harry.

‘Is it a tit, father?’ said Guy.

‘Yes, Guy, the long-tailed tit. Now, you will be more surprised still when I tell you that nine or ten little birds live in this nest. Feel how small the hole inside is.’

All the children put their fingers into the hole in turn. Then Uncle Tom said, ‘We may take this nest, for the little ones have left it.’

They went on walking away from the hayfield into a little copse of trees, while Uncle Tom was telling the boys about different kinds of birds' nests. All at once he called out—

'Stop, children, don't go farther,—here, Harry, here is really a snake which would hurt you if you touched him. See, he is not at all like the poor little slow-worm you killed.'

Harry ran behind his uncle, and looked at the creature from round his legs.

'If we do not hurt him he will not hurt us. That is a viper or adder. See, there is a little one.'

'It is a hooded viper,' said little Edith.

'Yes; and see, there are six or seven young ones.'

'Why does not it go away? nasty thing!' said Hugh, stamping his foot.

The adder did not seem at all inclined to run away; she reared her head, and hissed at the boys, but did not move nearer to them.

When all her little ones, who were not bigger than earth-worms, were close to her, the 'mama-viper' opened her mouth, and all the little ones ran down her throat.

The children stared, they were so surprised.

'She has eaten up her young ones,' said Walter.

‘I don’t like her for that ; it seems so very unkind.’

‘She has only swallowed them for a little while, and when we are out of sight, she will open her mouth, and all the little ones will run out again,’ said Uncle Tom.

‘Was that why she stood looking at us ?’ asked Guy. ‘Did not she mean to bite us ?’

‘No,’ Uncle Tom answered ; ‘if the little ones had not been with her, she would have got away from us as fast as she could ; for I have no doubt that all the time she felt very much frightened at the eyes and voices of all you boys.’

‘I don’t think she is pretty,’ said Alice.

‘Well, no ; she is not a pretty colour ; but her eyes are very bright. Do you know I once knew an old man who lived in a very small cottage made of mud, and he lived quite alone, excepting for vipers.’

‘Papa, did he like them ?’

‘He seemed to like them very much. They were very tame with him, and came to him when they were called. He said that he never took out their teeth, so I myself did not like to make too free with them, for they might have taken a fancy to biting me.’

‘But what did he tame them for, papa ?’

‘ He used to sell them, he told me, as pets ; he could always sell as many as he had.’

‘ What funny pets ! I should not like them, they are so slippery,’ said Walter ; ‘ and I am sure cousin Harry would not.’





CHAPTER VI.

THE RUDE FIG.

WHEN Uncle Tom and the children went back to the hayfield, there was the empty waggon just returning from the rick to fetch some hay. Uncle Tom jumped them all in, one after the other, and the carter smacked up the horses, so that they trotted with the waggon-load of children, who had to hold hard to the sides to prevent themselves from being thrown off their feet. Everybody laughed and screamed, as children may at haymaking time; but the jolting of the waggon made Hugh and Harry feel rather sick, for besides their having eaten many more cherries than were good for them, and the cherries being hardly ripe, in their hurry they had bolted a great number of the stones, and now they were rolling about inside them. But they said nothing, only they looked rather pale, until Guy noticed

how silent they were, and next that Harry leant over the side of the waggon.

We must guess what he leant over the side for. Had he been in the house he would have run for a basin.

‘Hillo!’ said Guy.

Hugh felt very vexed that his cousin had seen what Harry was about, and he answered very rudely—

‘Leave him alone, can’t you? Mind your own business.’

‘But he is ill,’ said Guy, without noticing Hugh’s rudeness.

‘Oh!’ said Harry. ‘Oh dear!—oh dear!’

Hugh kicked Harry’s shins to make him quiet; and as by this time he felt better, Harry took the hint.


‘What made you sick, I wonder?’ said Guy.

‘I wasn’t sick,’ Harry answered.

Guy looked very much surprised, then said slowly—

‘I think, Harry, you are a very wicked boy. You have told a horrid story; for I saw you being sick.’

‘He wasn’t,’ said Hugh. ‘It is you who have told a story; so you had better hold your tongue.’




Walter and little Edith had been chatting and laughing with each other and had not seen or heard what had passed. Guy turned very red, but said no more. The waggon was going so fast that it soon came to the other end of the field, and Hugh was very glad to get out, for he was afraid of following his brother's example.

They were to have tea in the hayfield, and the maid was already trying to spread the cloth upon the ground, which was all in bumps from the newly-made stubble. The wind was rising a little, and each time Mary Anne tried to smoothe the cloth at one side it blew it up at the other. She went round and round it, and at last placed a great loaf of bread in the middle, to keep it down, then the wind caught the corners of the cloth and whisked it over the loaf, so that the whole looked like a bundle of dirty linen for the wash. Guy ran to help, and got large stones to place at the corners, so as to keep the cloth down. And Mary Anne said—

‘Thank you, Master Guy. You always think of something clever to help other people.’

Hugh and Harry began to drag the things about, and upset the butter into the ground, so that it was covered with chips of hay, and then,



when Mary Anne told them to pick it up, they ran away, shouting,—‘ Pick it up yourself.’

After a great many trials the cloth was spread out, and dishes and plates put all over it to keep it down. Mary Anne put on the loaf of bread and a plum-cake, and then went into the house to get some more things. Guy and Hugh had not walked far from the cloth when they heard a grunt, which made them turn round. There was a great fat pig, which had made his way through the hedge into the field, and was now running towards the tea-cloth. Guy shouted and clapped his hands, but the pig only gave a grunt for answer, and trotted faster. Then Guy and Hugh both ran to him, but by the time they had reached him he was standing on the table-cloth with all four of his dirty feet, and was seizing hold of the loaf of bread. Guy pushed the pig with all his might, but pig only grunted, and was too wise to let go the bread. Hugh was surprised at Guy pushing the pig, for he had an idea that all animals, great and small, will bite, and he kept at a good distance from him.


‘ Get me a stick, Hugh!’ shouted Guy. ‘ He will eat the cake next.’

Hugh found a stick, and Guy thumped the pig’s sides with it; but he still grunted, as if

to say,—‘Can’t you let me enjoy my bread in peace?’

He took a good deal of whacking before he would move at all, and then he went off with the rest of the loaf in his mouth. Just as Guy had managed to drive away the pig, and turn him into his own field, Uncle Tom, Aunt Sophy, and the other children came up, and Mary Anne arrived with the teapot. She was very angry with the pig when she found the bread was gone, and that he had left the marks of his dirty feet all over the cloth; but the children were too hungry to wait to have it changed—all excepting Hugh; the cherry-stones were still rattling about inside him, and it turned him sick even to look at the cake. Aunt Sophy seemed very much surprised that Hugh did not eat anything, and asked him so many questions that he was obliged to try and eat; and he heartily wished the cherries were again hanging in their places in the garden, and their stones inside them.

Uncle Tom had just been helped to a slice of cake, and before eating it, was lifting his cup to his mouth to drink his tea, when everybody heard a grunt, and the pig’s nose came round the corner from under Uncle Tom’s arm, and gobbled up the cake from off his plate.



‘Why, how did the beast get into the field again? I thought you put him out, Guy?’

‘So I did, father; but I suppose he got through the hedge.’

Uncle Tom gave the pig a rap on the nose, at which he squealed as if he had been half killed, and then trotted away; but as soon as ever any one else had a piece of cake, the pig made a rush at it, so that he had to be every now and then rapped again to keep him at a distance.

The children had by this time finished their tea, and they all jumped up to chase the pig. You can have no idea, if you have never tried it, what fun it is to hunt a pig out of a field. To begin with, a pig is not afraid of anybody. He won’t go any farther than he chooses, and if he does choose, he gallops at such a rate that you can hardly keep up with him. Then, as soon as he finds out what it is you wish him to do, he will do anything but that. After a little while this pig guessed that the children wanted to drive him through a gap in the hedge, so he would go very quietly to within half a yard of the gap, and just as everybody thought that he would go through, he would kick up his heels, and give a squeak and a grunt, and go shying right across the field as hard as he could gallop. Then sometimes he

would stop and sniff at the ground, as if he had found something very nice, and the children might slap his fat sides, and push at him with all their might, he would stand like a wooden pig, and nothing would make him stir ; or else, just as he was very quietly trotting before them, as if he had not a wicked thought in his head, he would suddenly turn round and run between the legs of one of the boys, sending him, of course, sprawling on the ground. How the children screamed, and shouted, and laughed ! How they got crimson in the face, and breathless with running, and after all the pig was not a bit tired, and never lost his breath, and did not get red in the face—for he was a black pig—and was no nearer going through the gap than ever. After all, the best fun in the world is hunting a pig.

And when the pig had gone round the field at least sixteen times, always getting indignant and grunting as he came near the gap in the hedge, he all at once seemed to come to a better mind, for he gave one great grunt, and bolted off towards the gap, and went through it of his own accord without any driving.



CHAPTER VII.

WHAT MADE GUY A GOOD BOY.

BUT Hugh had taken no part in the pig hunt. While all the others were running about and shouting with such glee, he sat under the tree upon the grass; for the warm cup of tea he had drunk had made him feel more sick than ever, and he could not have run without throwing up the cherries which were rolling about inside him. What a lot of pain he brought upon himself for the very short greedy pleasure of eating Uncle Tom's cherries! It was not yet over, as you will see.

After the pig hunt they went home, and at the gate of the garden they were met by the gardener. Hugh and Harry both thought directly that something was the matter.

'If you please, master,' began the gardener, 'some one has been at they cherries, and it ain't

no birds neither, and it is since this mornin' as they have been took.'

He looked at Hugh as he spoke, at least Hugh thought he did so. Uncle Tom looked round at all the boys, but no one spoke except Hugh. He said—

'I am sure I didn't touch them!'

'Are you quite sure, my boy?' said Uncle Tom, who thought it odd that he should say so before he had been asked.

'Yes, quite sure!' said Hugh.

And Harry then said,—'So am I!'

'Can any of you tell me anything about it?' asked Uncle Tom.

'They was took by a boy, or rather by two boys,' said the gardener; 'for there's their foot-marks sure enough. Two sizes of marks there is.'

Then Hugh thought of, and said again, a very wicked thing.

'I remember,' he said, 'I remember now that, when Harry and I were running in the field after birds' nests, that I heard Guy and Walter's voices calling. They must have been quite near the garden. I don't know whether they could have taken them. He says there are marks of two boys' feet.'

Uncle Tom looked at Hugh for a moment in

such a way that Hugh almost thought he was going to box his ears, but he did not speak a word. The gardener did though.

‘ You don’t know, you owdacious young varmint you ! I’d teach you to say such things against Master Guy, who wouldn’t touch the worth of a farden if it was to save his life. I would, if I was Master—’

‘ Hush, that will do, Stumps,’ said Uncle Tom. ‘ We can easily find out to-morrow morning who took the cherries, by comparing the boys’ boots with the footprints, and whoever did it may look out for a good whipping. It is getting too dark to do it to-night though, and we had better go in-doors.

So there was a rod in pickle for Master Hugh and Master Harry, and they neither of them felt very comfortable, you may be sure.

But Guy and Walter, who knew they had nothing to do with the cherries, did not feel at all unhappy or afraid, and after a little while they forgot all about it.

Walter had said to his brother, ‘ Guy, who do you think took them. Don’t you think it was cousins ?’

Guy answered,—‘ Do not say so, Walter dear ; it is not fair, for we do not know anything.’

You see Guy was a very kind boy, for I really think he must have guessed that it was Hugh and Harry who had eaten the cherries.

‘Why mustn’t I say it, Guy?’ said Walter. ‘I don’t like them, they are nasty boys, and I think they tell stories.’

‘You must try to like them, Walter.’

‘What! nasty boys?’

‘If you dislike them, you will be unkind to them, and that is wrong,’ said Guy.

‘Who said so?’ asked Walter.

‘Jesus Christ,’ said Guy, in a low voice.

That was the reason that Guy Selby was a good boy, you see, because he remembered what our Saviour Jesus Christ had said.





CHAPTER VIII.

HUGH AND HARRY FOUND OUT.

VERY early the next morning Hugh stood near Harry's bed.

'Get up; get up,' he said in a low voice, pushing at his brother to wake him.

'What is it?' said Harry, sitting up. 'What's the row? What makes you dressed so soon? What do you want?'

'Come into the garden with me, Hal.'

'No, I won't,' Harry answered, 'I won't pick any more cherries. Those last were not half ripe, and they gave me a horrid stomach-ache; and I am sure you ate twice as many as I did, and you said we should not be found out; and now we shall be, I am sure, and I shall get a flogging from Uncle Tom; but I'll say it was you did it; see if I don't.'

'And if you do, I'll tell about your breaking

Aunt Sophy's cup,' answered Hugh ; 'so you had best hold your tongue. Listen to me, and I'll tell you what we must do. Of course, when Uncle Tom measures the footprints he will find that we did it, for our boots are different from Guy's and Walter's ; and we shall both get a flogging if you don't do as I say. Come into the garden before the rest are up, and rub out the foot-marks, and then nobody can measure.'

'All right !' said Harry, jumping out of bed.

'You can dress yourself properly afterwards,' said Hugh ; 'put on anything now so as to be quick.'

So Harry dragged on his trousers and his jacket without waiting for any waistcoat ; and put his boots on to his bare feet without any socks ; and with his face unwashed and his hair looking as if he had been crawling under the bed, he crept down stairs. He and Hugh went very slowly and softly lest they should be seen or heard ; and every time one of the stairs creaked they stopped, and their wicked little hearts beat fast, for they were afraid Uncle Tom would hear, and come out and catch them.

When they got to the garden, everything seemed safe ; there was no one in sight. Hugh and Harry went at once to the cherry-tree, and

began to scrape over the marks which they had made in the soft mould. They were both stooping, busy at doing this, when they were startled by hearing a loud voice shouting out to them—

‘Hallo! you there! so you are at it again, you young rascals!’

Harry was so frightened that he lost his balance, and fell over on his back with his heels in the air. It was the gardener, Stumps.

He came up close to the boys and said,—‘You are nice young gentlemen, ain’t you now? So you thought you would rub out the foot-marks, did you? as if anybody couldn’t see by your faces as you had took they cherries. I’m ashamed of you, I am; call yourselves gentlemen! I didn’t know as gentlemen thieved. Go along with you!’

‘Don’t tell Uncle Tom, please, Mr. Stumps,’ said Hugh, as soon as he began to feel less frightened. ‘Don’t tell him that you found us here. If you will not tell Uncle Tom, I will give you a shilling; I will, indeed.’

Stumps looked at Hugh for, I think, about five minutes without answering. He looked so long that Hugh felt very uncomfortable. After all this time, when the gardener did speak, he said—

‘You’ll give me a shilling! will you? “Mr.

Stumps" indeed! Get along with your "Mr. Stumps!" I'm ashamed on you! Get along with your shilling! I'm ashamed on you! *you* a young gentleman! I never! Get along with you! Won't I tell Uncle Tom, that's all!

And Stumps turned his back and walked away, every now and then prodding the ground with a spade he held in his hand; and each time he prodded a hole, muttering, 'Get along with you!'

Hugh and Harry sneaked out of the garden. They did not dare return to the house, so they wandered away through the field which led into the lane—and there they sat down by the hedge-side and began to abuse each other.

'It was all your fault,' said Harry. 'I should never have thought of taking the cherries if you had not asked me.'

'Well, I suppose you are not such a baby that you couldn't have said "No," if you liked,' said Hugh. 'You were ready enough, and you have told quite as many stories about it as I have, so you had better hold your tongue, or I'll make you.'

At this, Harry began to whimper. Just then a very dirty, shabby man passed—a tramp. The man sat down by the roadside, just opposite the

boys, and, taking his hat off his head—it was a very greasy, dirty hat, he took out of it a red cotton pocket-handkerchief—the handkerchief was also very filthy, and out of it he unfolded some bread and cheese, which he began to eat.

‘I wonder if it is jolly to be a beggar,’ said Harry, as he watched the man eating. ‘I should like to walk about all day, and eat bread and cheese by the roadside. Suppose we do!’

Hugh went across to where the man sat and stood near him.

‘Is it jolly to be a tramp?’ asked he, after a while.

‘Eh, master?’ said the man.

‘Is it nice to be a beggar?’ asked Hugh again.

‘Is it jolly to be a tramp?’

‘Uncommon,’ said the man, winking his eye.

‘Oh, uncommon nice to be a beggar! Try it, young master—uncommon jolly, particularly when you ain’t got nothing to eat. Oh, then, it just *is* jolly.’

‘I would rather have something to eat though,’ said Harry gravely. ‘What a funny man this is! I think I should like to be a beggar.’

‘Let’s be beggars,’ said Hugh. ‘Let’s run away, and then Stumps may tell of us as much as he likes. Uncle Tom can’t whip us.’

The man got up, for he had finished his bread and cheese; and as he walked away he looked back at the boys and laughed, and winked his eye again, and repeated—

‘Uncommon jolly!—very uncommon jolly! Try it, young masters; try it.’

‘I don’t like his face much,’ said Harry, when the beggar was out of hearing; ‘but he says it is very jolly, and he ought to know, because he is a tramp himself.’

‘I vote we turn tramps,’ said Hugh.

‘Must we tear holes in our clothes?’ asked Harry. ‘That man’s coat was full of holes.’

Hugh thought for a moment. ‘I think we had best, perhaps,’ said he. ‘Your jacket is old already, but your knickerbockers are much too good for a tramp. Here, wait a bit,’ and Hugh took his clasp-knife from his pocket and cut a large round hole in the leg of his brother’s trousers, so that the whole of Harry’s knee came out of it.

‘Oh dear!’ said Harry; ‘what ever will mamma say?’

‘You forget,’ said Hugh, ‘we are going to be tramps. She will not see it.’

‘For always?’ asked Harry.

‘Yes, of course.’

‘I don’t like being a tramp for always,’ said Harry. ‘I don’t like not to see mamma again ever.’

‘Oh, we shall see her sometimes,’ Hugh answered. ‘Of course tramps see their mothers every now and then; but if we do not make off now Uncle Tom will catch us.’

At those words Harry set off running with his brother, without waiting to think any more whether he would be a tramp or no, or for how long he would wish to remain a beggar, without thinking at all, indeed; for if either of these silly little boys had thought seriously for a moment, they would not have acted in the way they did that morning. Now, Hugh and Harry, as we know, had done very wrong, but there is no doubt of what they ought to have done now. If they had gone and told Uncle Tom all about the cherries and their own wickedness, they would have saved themselves a very great deal of pain and unhappiness. Even if they had got a whipping, it would have been better than all they brought upon themselves by running away from it. But I think myself, that if they had told Uncle Tom the truth, he would very likely have forgiven them, and not have flogged them after all; for papas, and mammas, and uncles are not

very fond of whipping little boys and girls, and would always be very glad of an excuse to forgive them. At least so I have found with the papas and mammas that I have known.





CHAPTER IX.

TURNING BEGGAR BOYS.

HUGH and Harry having torn their trousers as much as they thought fit for beggars, and having run until they were out of breath, stopped to talk over what they should do next. They sat down by the roadside, and straddled their legs very far apart, as they had seen the tramp do, and Hugh said—

‘Have you any money in your pocket, Harry? I have a shilling and a halfpenny. We shall have to get some breakfast.’

‘I have not any at all,’ Harry answered. ‘I spent my threepence yesterday in sweets. What shall we do when your shilling is gone, Hugh?’

‘Beg, of course!’ said Hugh. ‘What are we beggars for, unless we beg!’

‘But where can we get any breakfast? There

are no shops here,' said Harry again, who was already beginning to repent of having turned beggar.

'We must walk to the nearest town of course ; come on, and don't be a muff.'

Harry got up, and the two walked on for some distance without at all knowing where they were going. After a time they met a boy.

'Does this way lead to any town ?' asked Hugh of the boy.

The boy grinned. 'What town?' asked he.

'Any town,' said Hugh. 'Is there any town this way ?'

'May be there be ; may be there ain't,' said the boy ; 'go on and you'll find out.'

'What a disgusting boy !' said Hugh.

So they went on ; and after a great deal of walking, at length they came to quite a large town. Harry had been almost ready to cry with fatigue and hunger, and had a dozen times said he wished he had not become a beggar ; but when he saw the houses, his spirits rose again, and he walked fast.

As we know, neither of the boys had a hat, for they had left the house so early, and had not returned to it for anything ; and now the sun was

getting so high in the heavens, and so scorching hot, that it made them feel almost giddy.

‘I wish we could get somewhere into the shade,’ said Hugh. ‘Oh, there, look! there is a pastry-cook’s; go and buy some things to eat, and we will sit in the porch of this house to eat them.’

‘I don’t like,’ said Harry. ‘I am ashamed, my hair is so rough, the woman will stare at me.’

‘Beggars always have rough hair,’ said Hugh.

So Harry had to go, while Hugh waited outside.

‘What have you got?’ asked Hugh, when his brother came out again with a very large paper-bag.

‘Tarts,’ answered Harry.

‘How many?’

‘Twelve.’

So the whole shilling was spent at once, and the two beggars sat down to their breakfast of tarts. They felt better than they had a few minutes before, for the porch shaded them from the sun, and their spirits became very high as they ate tart after tart. Hugh had arrived at his fifth, and Harry had just finished his fourth, and they were laughing very much, when the hall door of the house to which the porch belonged opened, and a man-servant appeared.

‘What are you making this noise about, you dirty boys?’ said he. ‘How dare you come sitting on these steps? Be off directly! Off, I say, or I’ll make you!’

For the boys were so surprised that they sat still, staring at the man.

‘How dare you speak like that to a gentleman?’ said Hugh, looking very big.


‘Gentleman!’ laughed the man. ‘I never saw a gent before with such a dirty face and clothes so torn. Beggar, I should say, more like. Any way, be off with you!’

And the servant pushed first one boy and then the other off the steps, and then kicked the bag with the remaining tarts after them.

Hugh and Harry both felt very angry. Hugh was too angry to speak, before the man had shut the hall-door, and Harry vented his rage first in a burst of tears, and then in shying several stones at the closed door. He was in the act of throwing another, when his arm was seized from behind, and turning round he saw a policeman.

‘Take care, my lad,’ said the policeman, ‘if you shy stones in the street, I must take you to the station-house.’

Harry hung down his head, and Hugh said—



‘ That fellow in the house there was insolent ; he told us to move off, and called us dirty.’

‘ Did he though ?’ said the policeman, laughing ; ‘ well, you had best wash your faces perhaps, and then he won’t another time.’

The policeman moved away, and the boys not feeling inclined for more tarts just then, walked on through the town. They were beginning to feel tired of walking, but they did not know what to do with themselves, so they wandered about and sometimes looked in at the shop windows, until after a time they came to an end of the houses and on to a country road again ; and then they wandered into a field and lay down and went to sleep.

They must have slept for a long time, for when they woke the sun was gone, and both the boys felt very hungry. There were still three tarts left ; but what is a tart and a half for a hungry boy ? Harry and Hugh felt as if it was very little ; but they had nothing else ; and no money left but a halfpenny.

‘ And I am so dreadfully thirsty too,’ whined Harry.

‘ Let us look for a house and ask for something to drink,’ said Hugh.

They had to walk some way before they came

to a house ; but they were rested, although they felt so hungry. They came to a nice-looking house, and Harry said,—‘ You must ask, Hugh ; I went for the tarts.’

So Hugh, quite forgetting that he was a tramp and a beggar, gave a tremendous double knock. A servant came very quickly to the door, thinking that it must be a visitor of great importance who would not be kept waiting on any account ; and when he saw dirty Hugh, and dirtier Harry, without hats, or waistcoats, or socks, and with tangled hair, he looked very angry, and asked very crossly what they meant by knocking such a double knock at the door.

‘ I want something to drink,’ said Hugh, ‘ that’s what I knocked for—a glass of water.’


‘ Go along with you !’ said the servant, more angry than ever ; ‘ get out with your impudence !’

‘ What is it, John ?’ asked the voice of a lady who came into the hall.

‘ An insolent boy, ma’am, who knocks at the door and asks for a glass of water.’

‘ Well, fetch him a glass of water,’ said the lady. John looked very sulky, but he was obliged to do as he was bid ; and the lady stood by as the boys drank it ; then she said—

‘ Would you like something to eat ?’



‘ You are very kind,’ said Hugh ; ‘ we should like something very much, for we are both of us hungry.’

The lady looked at the boys again—it seemed to her strange that they should be so shabby, and yet speak so nicely ; for Hugh knew how to behave like a gentleman ; and whilst John was gone for something to eat she said to them—

‘ How did you come here ?’

‘ We are tramps,’ answered Hugh, who, now that he found they were going to have some food, thought tramping after all very good fun.


‘ You do not look like tramps,’ said the lady. John came back with some bread and cold meat. ‘ Would you like to eat it here, or take it away with you ?’ said the lady.

‘ I would like to take it away, if you please.’

So John was sent off again to get a piece of paper ; and his mistress wrapped up the bread and meat, and gave it to the boys.

They then politely wished her ‘ Good-bye,’ and she went in to tell her husband that she had seen two most wonderful beggar boys.

‘ This is very jolly,’ said Hugh, as soon as he and his brother were outside the garden gate. ‘ This is just exactly like real beggars. That’s the way to live—to ask at people’s houses for





‘ THIS IS VERY JOLLY,’ SAID HUGH.—PAGE 58.

something to eat, and then sit down by the roadside and dine. Isn't it jolly, Harry ?'

And Harry, in the prospect of plenty to eat, said—

'Yes, very jolly! much better than being at home.'





CHAPTER X.

NIGHT IN THE HAY WAGGON.

I^T was rather jolly being beggars so long as the bread and meat lasted, but by the time the boys had eaten most of it the night was coming on. All at once Hugh said, for he had thought of it for the first time—

‘I say, where shall we sleep?’

‘I am sure I don’t know,’ said Harry, looking frightened. ‘We cannot sleep out here, and we have no beds.’

‘We must walk on and look for some place to sleep in before it gets quite dark,’ said Hugh.

‘But I am so tired, I don’t like to walk any more. Look at my feet. I believe I have got chilblains, or something.’

Harry cried as he spoke, and pulled off his boots. His feet were blistered from having walked all day without socks.

‘But if we don’t look for a place we shall have to sleep here; and I suppose you won’t like that either,’ said Hugh.

‘Of course I shall not,’ whimpered Harry. ‘I don’t know what may come to us if we stay here—bears or wolves or something. I am frightened, and I wish we had never come away from Uncle Tom’s. I do. I shall go back home.’

‘You can’t find the way back home by yourself, I am sure,’ said Hugh, very unkindly; ‘for I shan’t go with you, and we must be miles and miles away from Uncle Tom’s house, so you may just as well come with me, or I shall leave you alone here.’

‘I can’t,’ still cried Harry. ‘I am so tired, I can’t.’

So Hugh moved away, leaving Harry crying by the roadside; but after a time the little boy got up and hobbled after his brother, for he thought that anything was better than being left alone, because of the bears and wolves, though I think he need not have been frightened about either of those beasts, for there were never any bears in England that I know of, excepting in the Zoological Gardens, and all the wolves have been dead many hundred years ago.

It so happened, after all, that the boys had not

very far to walk before coming to a sleeping-place. They went into a large field, where the hay had just been carried, and at the end of the field they saw a place which looked like a barn. When they came to it, they found that it was quite empty, excepting for a pile of hurdles heaped in one corner, and an old waggon, which was nearly worn out. Near the barn was a newly-made hay-rick.

‘Supposing we take some of the hay and fill the waggon with it, and then we shall be warm and comfortable?’ said Hugh.

Harry thought this would be a capital plan, and the two boys began at once to pull the hay out of the rick and carry it in armfuls to the waggon. Hugh and Harry had, as we know, lived all their lives in London, and it did not seem to them that they were doing anything wrong by pulling the rick to pieces. They never thought for a moment whether the hay belonged to any one or not. So while the farmer was at home, comfortably taking his pipe, after his day’s work, these boys were destroying his stack ; and would not he have been angry had he seen them ? When they had filled the waggon, Hugh said—

‘What a big hole we have made, and what a lot we have scattered about ? Supposing some

one comes and finds it out, don't you think we shall catch it ?'

It had only just occurred to him that perhaps they had no right to do as they had done.

'Let us clear up the mess, then, and stuff it into the hole,' said Harry.

So after that the damage did not look so much to them, but any one else could see it.

After that they climbed up the sides of the waggon and put themselves to bed,—without any prayers or any thought of God. Then, in a very short time, they fell fast asleep. It was a very comfortable bed, quite as comfortable as any the boys had ever had at home, and they slept so soundly after all their walking that they never stirred or woke until they were raised up by a very rough angry voice saying—

'Who can have been at the rick, I wonder, since last night? I left things tidy as may be. It's some thief of a youngster, I'll be bound, has been stealing my hay. Only let me catch him; that's all. Only let me catch him, and I'll skin him, as sure as my name's Bill Hawker.'



CHAPTER XI.

THE BOYS ESCAPE BEING 'SKINNED.'

HUGH and Harry lay crouched down in the waggon scarcely daring to breathe, lest the farmer should see them and skin them. They thought Bill Hawker would never go away ; he was such a time talking about the hole in the stack ; and he said the same things over and over and over again, although everybody there had heard him.

At last, to the boys' great terror, the farmer, after a great many more threats of skinning the boys when he caught them, declared that the rick must be re-made ; for it would fall lopsided from the hay having been pulled from underneath ; and he ordered the man who was with him to get out the other men and set about it at once—while he himself stayed there until their coming ; so the farmer sat down to smoke a pipe ; and there

seemed no chance of the field being clear until the hay-rick was re-made.

The man went, and Hugh ventured to peep out of the waggon. He caught sight of Mr. Hawker, and hid himself again ; then he said in a whisper to Harry—

‘ He is so awfully fat, Hal, you can have no idea ! his stomach is as big as—as big as six stomachs ! I don’t believe he could run ; he puffs and pants even as he walks. If the men come back, some of them are sure to see us, and then we shall be skinned. We had better try to run for it now.’

‘ But if he catches us, he will skin us,’ said Harry, trembling ; ‘ he said he would, you know.’

‘ We must try. I shall try at all events ; if you don’t follow, of course he will look for you in the waggon, so he will pay you off, as he won’t be able to catch me.’

So said Hugh with his usual selfishness ; and Harry could only cry and say he was very unkind,—as he was, indeed.

So there was nothing for Harry but to do as Hugh had said ; but first he, in his turn, peeped over the side of the waggon to be sure that the farmer was indeed too fat to run. He was very fat. He was sitting on a pile of hurdles outside

the barn, smoking his pipe, and looking at the hay-rick, so that his back was turned to the boys.

Very slowly and softly they both crept out of the waggon, at the further end from where the farmer sat; and still he looked at the rick and smoked, and did not turn his head. Slowly and softly they came round to the front, till they were within a few feet of Mr. Hawker's back, and clear of the barn, when round came the farmer's head, and open went the farmer's mouth; and I cannot say he jumped on to his feet, for I do not believe he had had a jump left in him for many years past, but he said something in a very loud voice, and then, when he was on his feet, he flourished a great thick stick at the boys, and shouted after them with all his might and main,—

‘Stop! stop! you young rascals! Stop! and I’ll give you such a hiding as you never had before in your life. Stop! and I’ll skin the pair of you! see if I don’t. Stop! I say; stop this minute!’

The farmer had not the least intention of running after the boys, he was too wise; he knew he couldn’t, but at the same time the boys were too wise to stop to be hided, or to be skinned; the more he shouted the faster they ran, and never paused to take breath until they were out of the

field, and out of hearing of the farmer's shouting; and about half a mile down the high road.

Then they stopped, and with all the breath he had, Hugh laughed, and said—

‘It was well we got away; only supposing he had caught us.’

‘Why, he would have skinned us,’ said Harry quite gravely. ‘He said again and again he would.’

It was all very well having escaped skinning; but that did not prevent Hugh and Harry from feeling very hungry, and they had nothing with which to get anything to eat but Hugh's remaining halfpenny. The worst of it was there were no shops near, or even any houses; and the further they walked the less likely they were to meet with any.

Harry was by this time a miserable-looking object. The great hole which, at starting, Hugh had cut in the knee of his trousers, had caught in a hedge and the whole leg had been torn, so that it flapped backwards and forwards as he walked. His boots had been old ones when he left home; it only required one or two good walks to wear them out; and Harry had had so much good walking of late, that the whole side of the boot had burst, and all his naked toes came out of the hole.

‘ It is so miserable, this boot of mine,’ he said. ‘ It jogs about at every step, and the edge of the leather scratches my toes.’

‘ Take it off and throw it away,’ said Hugh ; ‘ you will walk much better without it.’

Harry threw away the boot ; but he found that the road hurt his foot, and he went on crying and limping. After a time they came to a turn-pike, and Hugh went in to see if he could buy anything to eat ; but the woman sold only lolly-pops and nuts, and somehow the boys did not feel inclined for lollypops ; so Hugh spent his halfpenny in nuts. These did not go very far, and after they were eaten both the boys sat down and felt very unhappy. Hugh could not help seeing that he had been very foolish ; but although he had thought so several times before, he had not liked to say so to his brother.

‘ What are we to do now, I should like to know?’ asked Harry in a whining voice. ‘ Starve, I suppose?’

‘ I believe we had better turn back and go home again,’ said Hugh. ‘ I wish we had never come. I thought I should like to be a beggar ; but I don’t like it, because beggars seem so hungry. I never thought of that.’


‘ But we shall have to pass the field with the

farmer if we go home, and I dare not do that. He will catch us and skin us,' said Harry, looking very frightened.

'We must go home another way,' said Hugh; 'we will take the next turning we come to, and we shall get to that town where we bought the tarts. Oh dear! I wish we had got some meat now. I never knew what it was to be so hungry before; it is horrid, and I don't like it at all.'

So on they tramped again, more tired and more hungry every minute. The day was so hot, and the sun so glaring, that at times they felt as if they could not walk another step, and the dust flew up in their faces as they shuffled through it on the road, and got into their mouths and down their throats; and the dust was the only thing they had to eat for many hours. They left off talking to each other, but dragged slowly along with their eyes upon the ground, looking as much like two real little beggars as they ever could have wished before they started. Hugh had been wrong in thinking that the next turning would take them towards home. It went off quite another way, and they were going further and further away from the town they wished to reach, and further from Uncle Tom's house.

Towards evening they came to a meadow, where there were several cows.



‘ Oh !’ said Hugh, ‘ if we could only catch a cow and milk her !’

‘ Perhaps she would kick us. I should be afraid to go near her,’ said Harry, who was rather a little coward. But in that field they found a stream of water, at which they drank a great deal, and then washed their tired, sore feet. There were lots of water-cresses in the stream, if the boys had only known them ; but they thought they were only weeds, which comes of being little cockneys ; though I do not see why even little cockneys should not learn the names of plants and flowers, so as to know them again when they go into the country and see them.

They could not catch a cow. Whenever Hugh walked up to one, she moved away, until he gave it up. The gate of the meadow was opened, and there came in two women with their pails and stools, and a man. Hugh and Harry stood at a little distance, watching the women milking the cows. All at once one of the women looked up, and said—‘ What be staring at, young ’un ?’

Hugh hardly understood what she said, for her voice was so funny ; but he thought he might try for some milk, and he said—‘ I am so hungry.’

‘ Hungry !’ said the woman, ‘ and you look hungry too. Be the little ’un hungry ?’

The 'little 'un' meant Harry, who had been used to thinking himself such a man.

'Yes, indeed, I am,' said Harry, beginning to cry again.

So the woman gave them each some milk to drink; and when she had done milking the cows, she told the boys to follow her, and she gave them each a thick slice of bread and butter.

This was very kind of her, and Hugh and Harry stood by the house-door looking at her, after they had eaten the bread and butter, until the woman told them to be off, for she was busy, and couldn't have idle tramping boys standing about, lest they should lay their hands on something.

So Hugh and Harry moved away again, and wandered on, and as night came on they found themselves close to a thick wood of trees. It was a very beautiful wood, full of flowers of every colour, and the nightingales were already beginning to sing, although it was not quite time for them to do so; but Harry and Hugh cared nothing for the nightingales or the flowers. They threw themselves down upon the grass, and fell fast asleep almost directly under the shadow of the trees.



CHAPTER XII.

THE GIPSY CAMP.

HARRY started up, when they had been asleep for about two hours, in a great fright. He had heard a dreadful noise, not far away from where they were lying,—‘ Boo-oo-ooah.’

‘ It is some wild beast, I am sure,’ said Harry, his teeth chattering with fear. ‘ There it is again. Oh dear! we shall be eaten up. I’m sure we shall.’

. This time the noise was nearer and louder.

‘ Boo-oo-oo-ooah.’ The next moment Harry was running away with all his might, until he was brought to a stop quickly by tumbling over a stump of wood, and sprawling into some brambles.

‘ It’s a cow. It’s nothing but a cow,’ screamed Hugh.

Harry looked round. It certainly was more

like a cow than anything else, for it was an ox, who stood staring with his great eyes at the boys. The moon had come out, and the wood seemed quite light. Harry shivered with his late fright, and from having so few clothes on; for, though it was summer, the nights were cold.

‘I wish we could light a fire,’ said he.

‘But we can’t,’ Hugh answered. ‘We have no matches and no wood.’

‘I can’t sit here,’ said Harry. ‘I am so cold, and I am frightened.’

‘You are always frightened for something or other. I thought you were so tired that you could not walk any more.’

‘I would rather walk than sit here, with that moon making great shadows. It makes your face quite white, Hugh, and everything looks horrid. I can’t sit here, for I am sure I shall never go to sleep again.’

Hugh felt cold and uncomfortable himself, so he was willing to walk away with Harry, who kept looking behind him as he went, and sometimes almost screaming if he heard a slight noise. And there were plenty of noises, for the little rabbits were darting about in the moonlight, sometimes eating the grass, and then raising themselves on their hind legs to listen as they

heard the footsteps of the boys, and, upon seeing them, turning round quickly, and, with a kick up of their little hind legs, darting away until they reached the door of their holes, when they would turn round again, quite brave, and look about them. Large birds sometimes passed quite close to the boys. Great soft owls, hunting for mice, so close that with a stick Harry might have hit them, but he was dreadfully afraid of those big birds. There were night-hawks also, going in search of supper.

If Hugh and Harry had not been very ignorant little boys, they would have known that there was nothing to be frightened at in any of these things ; but, as it was, they were very much frightened, although Hugh, being a bigger boy, was ashamed to show that he was.

How often did they both wish that they had stayed at home ! Why, any flogging would have been better than all this unhappiness. Poor little boys, they were very much to be pitied, as all naughty boys are ; for sooner or later their naughtiness is sure to bring its own punishment.

They could not help the tears running down their faces as they walked, and Harry sobbed aloud.

‘What’s that ?’ said Hugh, after a while, stopping and listening.

Harry came as close to his brother as he could, for he too had heard a noise. They listened again. There was a sound like some one singing.

‘I wonder if there is any one in the wood,’ said Hugh. ‘Let us go towards the place quietly. Don’t let yourself be seen.’

‘No,’ said Harry; ‘for it might be the farmer, and he would skin us.’

As they went on the singing seemed to get louder, and after a time they could hear other sounds beside. There seemed to be several people talking, and there were crackling noises as if a fire was burning. The boys crept along amongst the bushes, until they came within sight of a large open space in the wood, and now they could see a bright fire blazing in the middle of the space, and people going to and fro. There were about six men and seven or eight women and one or two boys. The singing came from a woman, who was sitting close up to the fire and cooking something in a great black pot. She had on a bright red handkerchief over her head, and several of the other women had the same.

‘They are gipsies, I believe,’ said Hugh in a whisper. ‘I have seen pictures of them, and they always have red handkerchiefs on their heads, and they always live in woods.’

‘ Will they hurt us, do you think ?’ said Harry.

‘ I can’t help it if they do,’ Hugh answered.

‘ We can’t be more miserable than we are. Perhaps they will give us something to eat, or let us warm ourselves by their fire.’

So, although Harry was half afraid of going, they both walked out from amongst the bushes and right up to the fire ; and when the gipsies saw them the woman stopped her singing and stared, and the men said, ‘ Hallo !’ and most of them came and looked hard at the boys, and after a few minutes one of the men said—

‘ Well, what do you want ?’





CHAPTER XIII.

HARRY IS MADE A THIEF.

HUGH and Harry were so frightened at so many dark faces crowding round them, and so many black eyes looking at them, that for some minutes they did not answer, and one of the men, a very tall man, took Hugh by the shoulder, and asked again—

‘What do you want?’

‘We have lost our way,’ said Hugh; ‘and we are cold and frightened.’

The man laughed; then said—

‘Well, sit down by the fire and warm yourselves.’

You would hardly have known Hugh and Harry for the same boys half an hour afterwards. As soon as they got warm they became full of chatter, first with each other, then with the

woman who was boiling the pot, and at last with every one who came near them. The men seemed very good-natured, although they looked so fierce. The boys kept wondering what was in the pot upon the fire, it must be something very nice, they thought, by the smell. After a time the woman lifted the lid, and said supper was ready, and then all the rest of the gipsies came and sat upon the ground, and a number of cups and bowls was brought out of a caravan or great travelling-cart, such as you see at fairs, which was drawn up under the trees a little way from the fire.

Hugh and Harry were very much pleased that the gipsy woman gave each of them also a cup of soup. When the soup was drunk, she took out of the pot three fowls, which she tore into pieces, and divided. They made very short work of these ; they were gone down the gipsies' throats in a minute or two. Then one of the other women moved to a place where there had been a fire, and where there were still some ashes smoking. Hugh followed her to see what she was going to do ; he thought that perhaps she was going to light the fire up again, as one might not be enough for so many people ; but instead of that, she scraped the hot ashes

away, and underneath them Hugh saw that there was a large flat stone. The woman took up the stone, and from a hole in the ground she drew out several animals. They seemed so hot that she could hardly touch them. They were covered all over with long black and white prickly things, and they had snouts like little pigs. Hugh turned one of them over and over, and said—

‘He looks very nasty; his stomach is quite black.’

The woman laughed, and carried the animals to the fire where still sat the men; for they seemed quite content to sit still and let the women wait upon them.

‘Will you have some?’ asked Hugh’s friend, after she had skinned the beasts, prickles and all; they almost fell out of their skins, and smelt very nice at any rate, whatever they looked.

‘No, thank you,’ said Hugh. ‘It looks like a rat. What is it?’

The fact was, he was no longer hungry, or he would not perhaps have been so particular.

The woman said some word that Hugh had never heard before, and he could not make out what the animal was. After a time, seeing that he did not understand, the woman said, ‘Hedgehog.’

‘How can you eat a hedgehog?’ asked Hugh.

‘Hedgehogs are very good, young master,’ answered the woman. The gipsies, notwithstanding that the boys were so dirty and shabby, had seen that they were gentlemen.

As soon as supper was over, the men all jumped up from the ground, and the boys saw that most of them got down guns out of the caravan, while others carried empty bags.

‘Where are you going?’ asked Hugh.

The men gave no answer, but spoke to each other in their own language; and then after a time one of them said—

‘You shall come with us; can you climb?’

‘I can climb trees.’

The man spoke to one of the women in gipsy language, and she went into the caravan and brought out some very old clothes. She then told Hugh to take off his. Though his clothes were torn, they were lovely compared to those the woman held.

‘Why?’ asked Hugh. ‘I don’t choose to take off my clothes. I am not going to put on these disgusting old things, I can tell you.’

The woman very quietly began to drag off Hugh’s jacket; but Hugh tried to push her away, and became very angry; so one of the men gave

him a box on the ear, which settled the matter, and he made no more resistance.

Off came every rag of clothing from poor Hugh; and in exchange for his things he got a pair of trousers which were all holes, and big enough for a man.

‘How am I to wear these, I should like to know?’ asked he, as he dragged them on, and the top of them came up to under his arms, and his feet were buried somewhere in the legs of them. ‘Why can’t you let me wear my own?’

‘They are too good for climbing in,’ said the woman, laughing again; and fetching an old ragged red handkerchief, she tied the trousers tightly round Hugh’s waist, so as to leave a pile of corduroy standing up above the girdle, and rolled the legs of the trousers up to his ankles, in great things like two turbans.

Hugh could hardly help laughing as he saw himself such an object, and Harry shouted out loud. But he laughed the other side of his mouth when he also was told to take off his clothes and put on an old striped shirt. Here the sleeves had to be rolled back, and another girdle was found for Harry, which confined the shirt at the waist.

‘I can’t climb in these horrid things,’ said

Hugh, who had been trying to walk about. 'If you expect me to climb trees, you had best give me back my own clothes, for I can't go with you in these.'

'Then stay behind,' said one of the men. 'The little one will suit us better; you are too big.'

Hugh had wanted to go with the gipsies, and he felt disappointed when he found he was to be left behind; and as they moved away into the wood, he followed at a short distance; but being seen by one of the men, he got another box on the ears,—for ear-boxing seemed the usual allowance of boys amongst the gipsies,—and Hugh turned back quicker than he had come, and found his way back to the camp by the light of the fire.





CHAPTER XIV.

HUGH TURNS WISER.

HUGH was better where he was. I think if he had known what the gipsies were going 'to do he would have tried to keep away, and have nothing to say to them more than he could help. Do you know that gipsies generally live by stealing? They very seldom do any work notwithstanding they are such great tall fellows; and we might ask what good they are in the world if they prefer stealing other people's things to gaining their living honestly and like men.

I do not know whether gipsies believe in God, at least they cannot believe that God is angry with thieves, or they would not dare to live by theft. People do not know much about gipsies. They are a very odd people. Sometimes gipsy children have been taken to nice houses and taught, and have had everything they wanted,

but they have run away after all back to the woods where they were born. They do not like living, as we do, in houses. They would rather even be out in the rain and the wind and the snow.

Hugh had plenty to amuse him, although he was left in the gipsy camp. The women did not seem as if they meant to go to bed, but it had been dark for some hours now, that is, as dark as it ever is when the moon comes out every now and then. The women kept heaping wood upon the fire. I think that was to guide the men back to the place as they came home ; and then they fetched from somewhere near some buckets of water and emptied them into a large tub.

One of them told Hugh he might as well work as sit there doing nothing but stare, and she made him go with her for more water. Then Hugh found that there was a little stream a short distance off, behind the trees.


A lot of dirty clothes was then brought out, and all the women began washing them. They did not wash them very thoroughly it seemed to Hugh, and they hung them all round the fire to dry, upon poles stuck into the ground.

Every now and then a child would wake in the caravan, and sometimes cry, when it was

smacked by one of the women, unless it was a very small baby, when it was nursed. Hugh thought that they seemed to think nothing but smacking would keep children quiet, and he was glad that he was not a gipsy's child.

At length, a small baby was given to Hugh to carry about, for its mother was busy hanging out clothes. Hugh looked a funny figure as he walked about in the firelight, dressed up in the enormous big trousers, and trying to keep quiet the baby; but he did not dare refuse, lest he should get another box on the ears.

After a time he grew very sleepy, and I think fell asleep for a minute once or twice as he was walking; and as the baby seemed inclined to sleep also, after a time Hugh lay down upon the turf, not far from the fire, and he and the baby slept in each other's arms, and forgot everything about the wood and the gipsy camp, and being dressed in an old pair of corduroy trousers, until he was startled and roused up by a confused noise, and sitting up, still holding the baby in his arms, he saw that all the gipsy men had returned, with the bags they carried away empty looking quite full, and with poor little Harry led by the arm by one of the men, and crying violently. When they came close to the fire the men threw down



their bags and laid down their guns, and called for something to drink.

It seemed as if the work of the day was never going to be at an end, for the women roused themselves to attend once more to the men, and pipes and tobacco were got out, and bottles and mugs, and they sat down as if they had no intention of going to sleep.

Poor Harry stood apart, still crying, and Hugh went up to him and asked him what was the matter, but he only said in a whisper,—

‘I can’t tell you now. They are wicked, wicked men. Let us try to get away. Do let us try.’

‘But our clothes,’ said Hugh.

‘Never mind our clothes,’ whispered Harry again. ‘They will never give us those back. They are wicked thieves. Do let us try to get away.’

‘Wait till they are asleep,’ said Hugh, ‘and we will try.’

‘They will never go to sleep,’ said Harry in a sad tone of voice. ‘Hark at them now!’

The men had all begun singing a loud rough song, with every now and then a sort of shout in the middle of the music. It did not seem as if they would ever go to sleep.



THE GIPSIES' RETURN TO CAMP.—PAGE 86.



Hugh was afraid of standing too near Harry, lest the men should see them talking and box their ears for them. So after he had said what I have told you, he went back to his place on the turf and sat down. He did not fall off to sleep any more.





CHAPTER XV.

IN THE CARAVAN.



MUST get rid of this baby,' thought Hugh, 'or perhaps it may wake up and cry just as we are starting. Where can I put it?'

The woman seemed so satisfied with Hugh as a nursemaid, that so long as the child was quiet she did not care to take it from him.

Hugh tried to lay it down upon the grass several times, but whenever he did so, the baby stirred and made a little noise as if it would wake, and he had to rock it off again.

All at once one of the men glanced at Harry, and then said something to the others in their own language; and then a woman came to Harry and bid him get into the caravan and go to sleep. It was in vain that Harry said he would rather sleep outside, he was made to do as he was bid, and then Hugh was told to do the same. In he

got also, with the baby still in his arms, and as soon as they were in the caravan, the woman bolted the door outside.

‘We shall never get away now,’ said Harry. ‘They have guessed that we shall try it, and now they have shut us in.’

‘Why should they mind our going?’ asked Hugh. ‘We can do them no good!’

‘They are afraid we should tell of them. Oh, Hugh, you don’t know what wicked men they are!’ said Harry, again speaking low, and looking round as if afraid that some one might hear him from behind. ‘They went out to-night for nothing else but to steal and rob. They went to a farm-house, and made me get through the window of the hen-house, because I am small, and it was a little window. I said I wouldn’t first, and then that horrid man with the straw hat beat me; oh, he beat me so, Hugh! and another held his hand over my mouth, that I should not cry and be heard. Those bags of theirs are full of fowls and turkeys, stolen things, all stolen. When we were in the middle of stealing the fowls, the farmer heard us and came down, and then several more men, and there was firing of guns, and a great noise, and everybody ran away; and because I could not run fast enough, that horrid man beat

me again. Oh, Hugh, I am so miserable ! I have been a very wicked boy indeed. It all began with our stealing the cherries, though that did not seem so bad at the time ; and now they have made me be a regular thief,—they made me do it, Hugh ; I couldn't help it, and I am as bad as those wicked gipsies, for I am a thief.'

' And I have been a very wicked boy too,' said Hugh, gravely ; ' I have been worse than you, Harry, for I am older, and I thought of it first.'

Then the two little boys sat silent for some time, for they felt too unhappy to speak.

At last Hugh said,—' But why should they want to keep us here now, I wonder ?'

' Oh, I forgot to tell you that the farmer sent off a man to fetch some policemen, and that is what makes the gipsies afraid. They think, I suppose, that I shall tell the police where to find them in the wood ; and so I would,' said Harry ; ' for they are bad, wicked men, and they live by stealing.'

' What are we to do now ?' asked Hugh.

' I don't know ; I can't tell,' said Harry ; ' if we could only get out of this horrid caravan.'

' I wish it wasn't so dark,' said Hugh, ' and we might think of something.'

The caravan was lighted only in one corner by

a small end of a tallow candle stuck on to a piece of wire. There seemed to be two rooms to the caravan, for there was a door each side. Hugh and Harry were in the outer room.

‘I wonder if we could get this candle off the wire, so as to look about us?’ said Hugh.

They tried and found they could. Hugh gave Harry the end of candle to hold, and they both moved softly to the door. It was fastened only by a latch, and the boys went into the inner room. There were two beds on the floor of this inner room, and in the beds were several children fast asleep.

‘I wonder if I laid the baby down in the bed if it would wake it?’

‘Try,’ said Harry.

Hugh put down the child, and it still slept on; so, after watching it for a few moments, they went on with their search. There were several windows, but the boys found that neither of those at the sides of the caravan opened at all. There was another door at the back, but it was locked; and above the door there was a window. Hugh tried it, and found that it would open.

‘Now, I wonder if they are asleep,’ said he, meaning the gipsies outside. ‘I shouldn’t dare try to get away if they are still awake.’

The singing had stopped some time, so it might be that the gipsies were asleep.

Hugh climbed over the sleeping children carefully and looked out of one of the side windows. The men were all lying down in different ways, and by the light of the fire they looked asleep. Then Hugh put his head through the open window, and believed he heard, or fancied he heard, nothing but snores.

‘Do you think we can squeeze through?’ asked he of his brother.

‘I can, I am sure,’ answered Harry. ‘I do not know about you.’

‘I can but try, Harry; but how ever shall we climb up to reach the window?’

‘I saw a stool in the next room. I will fetch it.’

Harry did so, and the stool was placed against the window.

‘You first,’ said Harry; ‘for if you stick half-way, it will be of no use my trying.’

So Hugh went first, and happily he did not stick half-way; but he nearly fell on his head on the other side. He made such a noise, that he was afraid he should wake the gipsies; but they slept on, and presently Harry climbed after him.

Poor little Harry no sooner began to squeeze himself through the window than the gipsies, two


of them, woke up ; they had been half-waked by the noise Hugh had made.

Up jumped a man, calling out ' Hallo ! ' and Hugh had only time to walk into the shade of the trees, when the gipsy man ran to the caravan, and caught Harry hanging half-way out of the window. He pulled him out altogether, and set him on his feet.

' Where's the other one ? ' asked he.

' Run away,' said Harry, seeing that his brother was safe.

So they tied Harry to the trunk of one of the trees, so that he should not run away too, and telling him that he should get a beating presently, they began to rouse themselves up and be very busy, for the day was breaking fast. They could not have had more than two hours' sleep at the most ; for now it was only beginning to be daylight. But perhaps gipsies do not want so much sleep as other people. Hugh and Harry wished that they did.





CHAPTER XVI.

LEFT BEHIND.

THE gipsies were going away from the place where they had spent the night. Hugh, from where he was hidden amongst the trees, could guess that; for they drew out the caravan, and a man led a horse from somewhere out of the way where he had been tethered, and they put the horse into the shafts, and all the time the women were packing away the things—hanging pots one side, and kettles another, and baskets sticking out anywhere, as you may have seen caravans. Then the children crawled out and ran about. They did not seem to require any washing or dressing; at any rate, they did not get any. I think they had slept in their clothes, which was a very dirty plan. One thing was, that the gipsy children's faces and hands were so


dark that they did not show the dirt so much as you would.

Hugh saw all these things, as he sat crouched down in the middle of a thick bush. He was afraid of stirring lest he should be seen or heard by the gipsies. Some better feelings had come into Hugh's heart since he had heard Harry's story about the night; and he felt sorry that he had brought his little brother into all this trouble; and now, he would not go out of sight or hearing of Harry, lest the gipsies should hurt him.

It was God who had put these better feelings into the heart of Hugh. Are not you glad that he is growing a better boy?

And poor little Harry saw all that the gipsies were doing, and he kept wondering whether they would give him the beating he had been promised as soon as they had packed up; and whether they would untie him and take him with them when they were ready to start; and what would become of Hugh when they were all gone.

'Oh, if I could only once get loose,' thought Harry, 'and find Hugh, I would try to get back to Uncle Tom's; and if he does whip me, it can't be much after the beating I have had. But I have been a very wicked boy, and I deserve to be beaten.'



Harry tried to wriggle himself out of the rope which tied him to the tree ; but it was of no use ; the knots were too well tied, and he only hurt himself. At last the gipsies talked together for a few minutes, and then they began to move away.

Harry screamed, ' Don't leave me ! don't leave me here, tied up all alone ! I shall die, here all alone. There will be nobody to untie me ; there will be nothing for me to eat or drink. Untie me ! untie me ! Come back ! don't leave me !'

But the caravan went on, with all the men and women and children following ; and they took no notice, only one of the men, the one who had promised Harry the beating, turned round and held up at him a great cart-whip and laughed.

I think they left him tied, because it would give them time to get out of the way before Harry could tell the police which way they had gone. They felt sure that some one would come and search the wood for them before long. They did not intend Harry to be left there to starve ; they were not so very wicked as that.

But poor Harry knew none of their thoughts. He did not remember about the police ; he did not know the reason the gipsies were in such a hurry to get away ; and, perhaps, if he had thought of the police coming in search of them, he would

have been more frightened than ever, thinking that they would put him in prison for having helped to rob the farmer's hen-house.

So now he stood sobbing as if his heart would break at being left behind in the wood. He could not get either of his arms free, or he would have tried to unfasten the knots of the cord which bound him to the tree.

‘I can’t, I can’t do it!’ cried he; ‘wicked men! they have left me here to die!’

‘I am here too, Harry,’ said Hugh, running out from his bush as soon as he thought the gipsies were out of hearing. ‘I have been hiding near, to see what they would do with you.’

Then Harry could have cried for joy as before he had cried for sorrow; but he had had enough of crying just then, so he laughed instead, which was a better way.

Hugh could not for a long time undo the knots, for the strong hands of the man had tied them so tight; but he would not give up trying, and after a while, and by the time the sun was quite high in the heavens, Harry was free.

‘Now, we must try and find our way out of the wood, and then we will ask everybody we meet the way back to Uncle Tom’s,’ said Hugh.

And they left the place just a little too soon;

for half an hour afterwards the farmer who had been robbed and the police were on the spot, having traced the men through the wood by their footprints on the grass, which had still shown until the heavy dew had dried up; and if Hugh and Harry had been there, the police would have seen them safely sent home.





CHAPTER XVII.

ROASTING TURNIPS.

So Hugh and Harry were once more alone in the wood. They seemed to have grown older boys since they had last been alone in that way. Harry had had so much really to cry for during the last night, that he did not cry so easily for little things.

His feet were very sore, and scratched with brambles, and his dress of the old shirt, which was a world too wide for him at the shoulders, and inches too long for him in the sleeves, was as uncomfortable as it well could be, although, perhaps, not worse than Hugh's old corduroys. But Harry and Hugh walked on, thinking only of how soon they could get clear of the wood, and saying nothing to each other of how hungry they were beginning to feel; for they knew it was of no use. What was there to eat there?

They walked more slowly every hour, and were feeling faint from being so tired and so hungry ; and night came on again, and yet they were not out of the wood. How could they be, when they did not know their way out ? They might have been walking round and round all day, and never getting on at all ; and so they were, for as evening closed in, they found themselves once more upon the gipsies' camping ground.

Then Hugh and Harry sat down as if there was no hope left. They said nothing one to the other, but threw themselves back upon the turf, and fell fast asleep from grief and faintness.

Poor children ! they had had no rest the night before, and no food all day, and so much to make them unhappy, that it was no wonder. But it was very early the next morning that Harry woke, and sitting up, he said to his brother—

‘ Hugh, it was very stupid of me, I never thought of it yesterday, but I think I could find my way to the farm where they got all the fowls and turkeys. I know there is a tree all twisted just at a corner, and you turn down by that tree, and it leads you straight into the road. Perhaps the farmer will not see us ; but if he does, it will not be so bad as dying of hunger here.’

So they rose up with fresh spirits, and went to look for the way. Harry was right. After a time they came to a tree all twisted in the branches, and standing at a corner of a path. Down this path they went, and after a walk which seemed to them very long, they came to the end of the wood, and on to the high road.

That was all they wanted; they did not dare go near the farm-house, so they went along the road, and after a time they met a ploughboy.

‘Oh! there is actually a boy,’ said Hugh; ‘let us ask him.’

They asked the boy, but could learn nothing of him. He had never heard of Mr. Thomas Selby, their uncle, nor of Greenway Cottage.

There was a field close by where they stood with the boy, and Hugh seeing things growing out of the ground, asked what they were.

‘They? they’s turmuts,’ said the boy.

‘Are they good to eat?’ asked Harry.

‘Ain’t they, when they’s ripe, that’s all;’ said the boy. ‘Roasted, they’s just prime; but these here ain’t noways ripe. They’s little uns; wait till em’s a month or so older.’

But Hugh and Harry were much too hungry to wait for a month or two; and when the boy moved on, the one said to the other—

‘ Let us get over the gate, and eat some of them !’

So they did ; the turnips were only half-grown ; but raw half-grown turnips were better than nothing to empty stomachs, and I am sorry to think how many Hugh and Harry ate. Then, when they were a little less hungry, Hugh said—

‘ I wish we could roast some of them. I dare-say they would be very good roasted.’

‘ Why, what is that ?’ asked Harry, pointing to another corner of the field, where a thin cloud of blue smoke was rising. I believe there is a fire out there.’

They walked to the place, and found two boys sitting by a fire.

‘ What are you doing ?’ asked Hugh.

‘ Mind your own business,’ said the boy rudely ; and then they both laughed, because Hugh was dressed such an object. Hugh a few days ago would have been very angry at being laughed at, but now he felt more inclined to cry. He stood by the two boys, looking at what they were doing, and presently he found that they were roasting turnips in the fire.

‘ I wish you would let me roast some turnips in your fire,’ said Hugh. ‘ We can’t make a fire ; we have no matches.’

The boys were not ill-natured although they were rude, and one of them said—

‘I don’t mind, if he don’t mind. Do ’ee mind, Bill?’

‘Not I,’ said Bill, ‘there’s room for all.’

Hugh and Harry quickly pulled up some turnips, the biggest they could find; and as they sat roasting them, and eating them as fast as they were done, they felt quite happy again.

But suddenly, just as they felt most comfortable, there was a loud shout from the other end of the field, and they saw a man and a dog coming towards them, upon which Bill and his friend started to their feet, scrambled through the hedge, and ran away as hard as ever they could go.





CHAPTER XVIII.

FARMER BENSON.

BILL and his friend had taken to their heels, but Hugh and Harry felt too frightened to move. Besides, they could never have run from the farmer, who was coming towards them; for he was a great strong man, and strode across the field like the giant in the seven-league boots. He seemed like some terrible giant to poor Harry, who turned white and trembled, and said to his brother—

‘It is the farmer whose hen-house we robbed. I shall be sent to prison now, and perhaps I shall be hanged.’

‘What are you doing here, you young scamps?’ asked the farmer, as he came up to them, in a very loud voice.

Harry could not speak, but Hugh said—

‘We were roasting turnips.’

‘Roasting turnips, were you? You’re a nice lad, to tell me that to my face! And, pray, what business have you to be trespassing in my field and lighting a fire to eat my turnips? eh!’

‘We were hungry,’ said Hugh. ‘We had had nothing to eat all day.’

‘But you shouldn’t have stolen my turnips for all that, my lad,’ said the farmer kindly. ‘You mustn’t do it again, mind you.’

‘We didn’t mean to steal them,’ said Hugh.

‘No; you only meant to take them without leave, I suppose,’ said the farmer, and he laughed. ‘Now, then, be off, and don’t show your dirty little faces in my turnip-fields again. Do you hear?’

‘Yes,’ said Hugh; and he was about to move away, when the farmer said, ‘Hallo!’ for he had caught sight of Harry.

Then he got very angry indeed, and I wonder he did not thrash the boys with the stick he held in his hand.

‘You young scoundrels!’ said the farmer, ‘you are nothing else but a couple of young trained thieves. Not mean to steal, indeed! As if you didn’t know what stealing means a vast deal too well. I don’t believe a single word of what you have said. It’s a good thing I have caught you

young rascals, for I'll have you into jail in no time ! Yes, I don't wonder at your being ashamed of looking me in the face,' said he to Harry, who covered his face with his hands. ' I don't wonder. I remember your wicked, dirty little face, the night before last. Come on with me at once. No ; hold your tongues. I won't believe a word you say.'

For Harry was beginning to try and tell the farmer how he and his brother had fallen in with the gipsies. It was in vain that he sobbed, and begged and entreated ; the farmer would not hear him. And Hugh and Harry found themselves next locked up in an empty coach-house, while the farmer sent off for a policeman.

I don't exactly know what Hugh and Harry thought the policeman would do to them, but they were dreadfully frightened of him when he came, and more frightened still when the man fastened the two boys' wrists together with a handcuff, so that one could not run away without the other.

The farmer had told his story to the policeman ; and when the man opened the coach-house door and saw Hugh crying, and Harry crouched in a corner trembling with fear, I think he was surprised, for he expected to see two very wicked-looking boys. The handcuff which was put round

Harry's wrist was so much too big for him that his little hand slipped through it, and he looked at the policeman and said, in a miserable little voice—

‘I can't keep this on, if you please.’

‘Well, I never!’ said the policeman. ‘Are you quite sure, Mr. Benson,’ turning to the farmer, ‘as this little ‘un is the ‘dential chap as committed the robbery the night before last?’

‘Sartain sure,’ said the farmer.

‘Yes, I did,’ said Harry. ‘I have been a very wicked boy, I have; and I stole Uncle Tom's cherries; but I couldn't help stealing the fowls. The gipsies made me; they beat me so.’

‘There, that will do, my lad,’ said the policeman. ‘Keep all that till you are before the gentleman. Don't tell no tales against yourself. There, catch hold of my hand; and look you, don't you try to run away, or I shall have to use my staff; and it does bite a boy hard, just.’

And the policeman took from his pocket, and showed Harry, the short, thick stick which he carried with him, and which all policemen have.

‘I shall not run away,’ said Harry. ‘I can't; my feet are so sore.’

Happily for the little boys, they had not far to walk before they came to the magistrate's house,

although you may be sure that Hugh and Harry would have gladly put off the time. During the walk both the boys had been thinking over all the trouble which they had brought upon themselves, and the sorrow which they had felt in the wood for having been so wicked came back again.

All at once Harry said to the policeman—

‘Do you think that God will hear a very, very wicked boy if he says his prayers?’

Now, the policeman was a very kind man, who had a number of little children of his own, and he stooped down to look into Harry’s face before he answered.

The poor little face was blurred with crying, and streaked with lines of dirt where the tears had not washed it a little cleaner.

‘Have you been a very wicked boy, my lad?’ asked the policeman.

Harry sadly nodded his head.

‘I have been dreadful. I broke Aunt Sophy’s china cup, and told a lie; and then we stole Uncle Tom’s cherries, and told more lies; and then we ran away and thought we would be tramps. I did not know what tramping meant when we ran away. And then we fell in with those wicked gipsies, and they made me be as

wicked as they were. Indeed they made me. Do you think God would listen if I said my prayers, policeman ?'

'Yes, I think He will,' said the policeman. 'Try it, my boy. You are sorry, ain't you ?'

There was no need to ask that again. Poor Harry's bitter tears of sorrow answered for him.

But I think the policeman hardly expected what the little boy was going to do next. Harry went down upon his bare knees on the dirty road, and hiding his face against the leg of the policeman, he said, in a weak little voice—

'Pray, God, forgive me for being a very wicked boy, and make me better, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'


The policeman was still looking down at Harry, when Hugh said—

'I was much worse than my little brother, for I first asked him to steal the cherries.'

'Then you must follow your little brother's example, my boy, which is a much better one than that you set him,' said the policeman.

Then Harry jumped up and put his arms round the policeman's neck, and kissed him ; and the policeman said—

'Poor little chap ! It is very hard lines doing wrong, is it not ?'



Do you understand the meaning of the policeman's words?

When children or grown people forget God and do wicked things, they are sure to suffer from it sooner or later. If it has pleased you to read about what befell Hugh and Harry Selby, I want you at the same time to remember what their story teaches you. When once people begin to do wrong, they never know where they may stop; or if they may ever stop at all; and when once people forget God, the devil tries to get hold of them and make them more and more wicked.





CHAPTER XIX.

BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE.

IT seemed very awful to Hugh and Harry to have to be brought before the magistrate. The policeman rang the hall bell ; and when the servant answered it, the policeman said—

‘Is your master at home ? I’ve a queer case of stealing here.’

‘What ! them boys !’ said the servant, who did not know much of grammar. ‘Seems to me I have seen them young rascals before now.’

Hugh looked up and saw that it was ‘John,’ who had given them the bread and meat two days before. He could not help hoping that the kind lady who had ordered the bread and meat for them might not see them ; for he was so very much ashamed.

‘So,’ said John, ‘you’re the chap as comes with double knocks, are you ? and orders a fellow

to get you a glass of water, as if you was a gentleman. You're a nice-looking boy, you are !'

Hugh felt very angry, but he gave no answer, and the policeman said—

'There, that'll do, Plushes.' He called the footman 'Plushes' because of his plush breeches. 'That'll do. They ain't bad sort of lads, I believe, though things do look queer.'

'Well ! I never met with a bobby as took the part of juvenile thieves afore !' said John, who did not like being called 'Plushes.'

'Is your master at home ?' asked the policeman again. 'You never answered my question.'

'Well, he is, and quite ready to hang all young offenders,' said John. 'He's a sitting now in his study ; so come on, youngsters, and be hanged.'

Harry really believed that he might be perhaps hanged for robbing the farmer ; and he shrank behind his friend the policeman, while that kind man got very angry with John, and said—

'Go and tell your master my message, can't you ? or I'll go round to the back door and see if I can't get in that way.'

So John was obliged to go ; which he did after making an ugly face at Harry ; and in a few minutes he returned, saying that they were to follow him.

John took the policeman and the boys to his master's study; and upon going into the room, the first thing they saw, and the only thing, was a gentleman sitting in an arm-chair. Hugh and Harry were so terrified, that the gentleman looked to them bigger and graver and wiser than any man they had ever seen before.

Now I want you just to remember what Hugh and Harry looked like as they stood before the magistrate.

Hugh in the old pair of man's corduroy trousers, reaching up to his chest, and tied at the waist with the ragged old handkerchief; rolled in heavy folds widely up to his knees, with his dirty bare legs and feet cowering below them—no hat on his head, but his hair hanging in tangled wisps over his eyes; and his face and arms and hands grimed with dust and dirt.

Harry just as dirty, with nothing on but the old torn shirt, with hardly any arms left, and all in rags at the skirt. They were very funny little objects to stand in a gentleman's study.

The policeman said something to the magistrate, and then that gentleman asked Hugh—

‘What's your name, boy?’

He spoke so sharply, that Hugh could not answer for a moment; and he repeated—

‘Tell me at once; what’s your name?’

‘Hugh Selby!’ said Hugh.

The magistrate looked hard at him; but Hugh’s eyes were bent upon the floor, so that his face could hardly be seen, and the magistrate turned to Harry—

‘And yours? what’s your name?’

‘Harry Selby, sir.’

‘What do you mean, boys?’ asked the gentleman. ‘Hugh Selby and Harry Selby!—who is your father?’

‘Papa’s name is George Selby,’ said Hugh in a low voice.

‘Constable, bring those boys nearer to me,’ said the magistrate. ‘Here is something very strange; I can’t make it out. What is your father, boys?’

‘He is a barrister; he lives in London,’ said Hugh.

The magistrate jumped up from his seat and rang the bell.

Poor Harry had been so frightened that he had not dared to look in the magistrate’s face, and every question he asked seemed to frighten him more; until, when he jumped up so quickly and rang the bell, Harry thought, at the very least, that he was going to be punished on the spot, or

perhaps he had scarcely strength to think what he expected would happen next ; for he fell flat upon his face upon the floor, and lay there quite still, fainted.

Then Hugh looked at the magistrate, when he called out, ' Take him up, and lay him on the sofa here, constable,' and saw that it was Mr. Marshall,—the very same gentleman who had ridden over to Greenway Cottage to see Uncle Tom, and who had spoken to him and his brother and asked them their names ; and who had said to them words which the boys had so soon forgotten, and which would have been so much better for them to have remembered.





CHAPTER XX.

ALL FORGOTTEN.

Poor little chap,' said the policeman, raising Harry in his arms.

The bell was answered by John, who looked very much surprised at seeing Harry the beggar boy lying on the sofa.

'Tell your mistress I would be glad if she will come to me here,' said Mr. Marshall; 'and bring some wine directly.'

John said, 'Yes, sir,' and retired.

And in a minute or two the same lady who had been so kind to the little boys came into the room.

'Are these the little tramps you spoke to me of?' asked Mr. Marshall.

'I think they are,' answered the lady, 'only they were dressed in knickerbockers, I believe, when they were here before.'



‘ARE THESE THE LITTLE TRAMPS?’—PAGE 116.

‘The gipsies stole all our clothes, and made us have these horrid things,’ said Hugh.

‘I only wish I had seen them, then,’ said Mr. Marshall. ‘Poor Selby might have been spared so much pain and anxiety; but I might not have recognised them even if I had seen them. I could not believe they were George Selby’s children even after they had told their names; and even when I have been mixed up with the hue and cry after them.

‘I thought as the lads was something out of the common,’ said the kind policeman, scratching his head; ‘and I thought of Mr. Selby’s boys as had wandered away; although it was no business of mine to be asking their names.’

‘You were quite right,’ said Mr. Marshall. ‘Have a glass of wine, constable?’

All this time Mrs. Marshall was trying to put some wine down Harry’s throat. As he had fainted only from fright, he soon came round again, and his first words were—‘I couldn’t help it; indeed I couldn’t; the gipsies made me do it; and when I said I would not, they beat me.’

‘I think you had better have them both put to bed,’ said Mr. Marshall in a low voice, ‘and, pray, have them washed a little first. I shall ride myself over to Selby’s.’

Indeed they wanted washing, as you may suppose ; and when they were put into a nice soft bed they both of them fell fast asleep, and forgot all their troubles.

Meanwhile the policeman went back to Farmer Benson, and told him that the two young beggars had turned out young gentlemen ; and when the farmer had heard it, he gave himself a tremendous hard slap upon the thigh, which I am sure must have made his leg ache for some minutes, and said—

‘ Blow me tight !’

Now, what ‘ blow me tight’ means I don’t know. If the very fat farmer in whose waggon Hugh and Harry had slept had said, ‘ Blow me tight,’ one might have said that he was blown quite tight enough already, seeing that his stomach was as big as six stomachs ; but Farmer Benson was not very fat, so perhaps he wished to be a little tighter. At any rate it is not an expression for young gentlemen and ladies ; so you must not use it ; but it did very well for a farmer.

So he slapped himself on the leg, and said in a loud voice, ‘ Blow me tight !’

Then he smoked for a few minutes, and afterwards he said—

‘ If I’d ha’ know’d it, I’d ha’ been the first to

take 'em home to their uncle's ; and, after all, there was something about the boys as seemed like gentlemen, warn't there now ?'

' You didn't seem to see it, master, before you gave them over to me, poor little chaps. I did feel for that little 'un, I did,' said the policeman.

When Hugh and Harry woke up, they could not remember where they were. The room was nearly dark, excepting for a shaded little lamp quite in one corner.

' Hal,' said Hugh in a low voice, and sitting up in the bed, ' are we at home ?'

' No ; this is not our bed,' said Harry, looking at the curtains. ' Hugh, I believe we are still at Mr. Marshall's house ; and, oh ! do you think he has sent for Uncle Tom ?'

' The lady was very kind,' said Hugh. ' I remember it all now. She had us put into a bath, and the water was quite black ; and then she helped us into this bed, but she said nothing about Uncle Tom. I wonder if she knows all about it, and what wicked boys we have been ?'

' Hugh,' said Harry very gravely, ' do you think we shall always be wicked boys ? Do you know I don't like it. I would rather be a good boy.'

' So would I,' answered Hugh. ' I used to think it was rather fine to be naughty, but I don't

think running away and being beggars at all fun, and I am sure it was all from stealing those cherries, because they made me feel so dreadfully sick.'

'That was what began it all,' said Harry.

'Began what?'

'All the unhappiness. We had to tell lies to hide taking the cherries, and then we were afraid of the lies being found out, and we ran away.'

There was a noise of footsteps and voices just then outside, and Harry began trembling, for he felt sure it was Uncle Tom.

And so it was, and some one else besides—the boys' own papa, who had been telegraphed for to London, and who had come down so sorry and so frightened for his children, and he and Uncle Tom had been for the last two days going all over the country searching for the boys, sometimes hearing of the two little tramps, but all this while unable to find them.

I think if Hugh and Harry had known the grief which their papa had felt when he arrived at Uncle Tom's and heard that the two boys had been lost, and how no one had liked to tell their mamma about it, lest she should break her heart, I think these little boys would have been careful

all their lives after to make up to their parents for it.

Perhaps they were. I am quite sure they were better boys always after that.

When papa and Uncle Tom opened the door and came into the room, Hugh and Harry both jumped out of the bed and ran towards them. And Hugh said—

‘Oh, papa, papa! I have been a very wicked boy! I know I have; and I ought to have a flogging. I stole Uncle Tom’s cherries, and got Harry to do it too, and then I told lies; and it was I got Harry to run away, papa; he never would have thought of it if I had not. I have been much the worst of the two. I have—I have; but kiss me, papa! please kiss me, though I am a wicked boy.’

Mr. Selby took Hugh in his arms and kissed him a great many times; and Hugh felt that his papa was crying.

And poor little Harry was all the while kneeling on his knees, with his face in his hands, sobbing. Papa never said a word for some time. I think he could not speak; but presently he took up Harry in his turn, and kissed him, and sat down with him upon his knee.

Then all at once Hugh remembered Uncle

Tom, and he said,—‘ I wish I had stayed with you, Uncle Tom. I would sooner a great deal have been whipped, and I know I ought to be.’

But Uncle Tom did not whip either of the boys. He thought that they had had a better lesson than that ; and I told you that papas and mammas and uncles are never very fond of whipping little boys.

And later, when every one felt more quiet, Hugh and Harry told their papa that they would like to try to be good boys for the future ; and their mamma and papa showed them that the only sure way of being so, is to ask God’s help to be good ; and, like their cousin Guy, to remember always what Jesus Christ said.

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